

## **Funhouse by lavenderfieldscemetery**

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**Summary:** There is something lurking in the sewers. Something completely and utterly evil... Could you resist killing your mortal enemies in the throws of madness? Henry Bowers x Patrick Hockstetter

## 1. Chapter 1

It was mid-afternoon and Henry Bowers was out at the port with his small gang of close greaser friends. He often used this as an excuse to hide from his deranged father after summer school. Henry's dark hair was slicked and gelled back into a DA, a style rather popular with the greaser boys this season. Everywhere he went, Henry carried a little tube of Pomade in his jeans pocket - it helped to keep up his appearance. After all, the boy wanted to maintain his reputation as a greaser. His deep brown eyes were squinted against the sun yet you could still see the small glint of mischief in them. His lips were twisted into a boyishly cruel smirk; the expression of a five year old pulling the wings off a fly, or even a sadist taunting their prey. Like his peers, Henry was obsessed with Elvis Presley and tried his best to imitate his leather-clad biker and blue jeans look. Of course, working on a farm wasn't as glamorous as Henry could have wanted (certainly not like the rock star fantasies he often had) but it gave him a muscular build - he had that to be grateful at least. For a fourteen year-old boy, most of the girls supposed Henry Bowers was handsome. Maybe some of the girls would have a crush on him if he weren't so intimidating? Either way, Henry wasn't too bothered about what the girls thought of him - he only cared for what his father would think and would walk on egg shells for the rest of his life just to make his old man happy.

The sun glinted off Henry's switch-knife, of which he was gazing at dreamily, flicking it open and closed with the press of a button. His two rather odd-looking friends watched worriedly, the tallest ones' frown deepening, the shorter one casting his eyes anywhere but at Henry, his expression almost pained with anxiety. Both teenage boys stood stock still almost as if they were soldiers waiting for instructions from their Sargent. Both looked although they were dealing with quite a lot of physical pain, hardly daring to move, hardly daring to breathe. Upset Henry and you could never be sure what would happen. He was that unpredictable. So unpredictable in fact, that both his friends were terrified of saying anything a vast majority of the time.

'Hey, Henry!' A small, slightly chubby 12 year old boy suddenly

popped out of nowhere, making Henry Bowers flinch out of his day dream. *would he of all people fucking talk to me?! I thought I told him to keep outta my sight!* His voice sounded shockingly peppy and headache-inducing to Henry, who gritted his teeth to stop himself from lashing out already.

Patrick Hockstetter was crazy. That, everybody knew. Even the teachers had to be wary of what they said or did around Patrick - he was just so *odd*. So confused with little grip on reality. How did his parents keep from sending him away to be inspected? Nobody had a clue, and truth be told, none of his classmates had any idea what Patrick's home-life was like. His parents must be as mad as he is, Mrs Reichs, their homeroom teacher often mused in between marking Patrick's extremely muddled test papers. As Patrick had a rather perplexing mindset that he were the only true being in existence, he had a rather narcissistic opinion of himself compared with his greaser acquaintance. The two were constantly clashing, and Henry wondered why he even invited the boy out to play with them in the first place. Pity... That was more than likely the answer. Everything from Patrick's half-hearted attempt at slicking back his blond hair in greaser style, to his dusty green eyes and his pallid moon-face to his broad, slightly parted livery-lipped smile irritated Henry. And God! Don't even get him started on Patrick's eyelashes! Henry was almost certain that Patrick wore his mother's mascara to school. He was far too feminine to even be a boy in Henry's opinion - and Henry didn't hang with girls as much as he could help it.

The boy giggled and came bopping even closer as if he were some sort of cheerful puppy, or one of those little shits from Derry Elementary. *A Labrador. Yes, that suits him rather well! I thought I told that flako to keep the fuck outta my sight!*

'Oh look! If it isn't the sissy boy!' Henry retorted cattily, causing his cronies to jeer and shriek with malicious laughter. A devilish leer lit up Henry's slightly messy features, making him look almost handsome.

This didn't seem to cause any distress to the young boy – he simply smiled in his usual porky vacant manner. He was used to the greaser's taunting. They had been in each others class for just over a year now when Henry got moved back into 6th grade for misbehaving. In fact,

*nothing* seemed to bother Patrick Hockstetter! When Patrick was only 5 years old he slowly suffocated Avery, his baby brother, out of jealousy because he thought he would be replaced in his parent's hearts. Age 6 he found the joys of killing insects with his mother's sewing needles. Currently Patrick has become verging on Psychopathy, torturing stray dogs and cats by locking them up in a rusty old Amana fridge in Derry Dump. Being a mostly emotionless boy, life just goes on for crazy old Patrick.

Fortunately for Patrick, practically nobody knows about his dirty little secret just yet. Apart from just one person. Bowers. I suppose you could say their friendship is a little bit flawed. Mostly based on threats and nothing more.

'Have you come to finish your job?' Henry drawled, feeling his cheeks flush a little. More hysterical laughter from Victor and Belch. Those two boys didn't even understand what Henry meant by 'job'. They simply laughed because Henry was their leader and they looked up to him and whatever shitty things he does, no matter how sickening or dangerous.

'... If yoouu want..' Patrick smiled and did some odd little bounce on the spot, making him look slightly hyperactive. Victor and Belch were shrieking now. Tears threatened to spill from Belch's eyes as he clutched the edge of the wall for support. Victor was hiding his face in his arms, slumped over in hysterics on the sea wall. Small sobbing noises were made but to Patrick they sounded a little too loud.

'CUTE! REAL CUTE!' Henry ranted down at the younger boy, shoving him into a nearby tree. Patrick's dusty green eyes flickered up at Henry's dark ones in surprise. 'Why does Henry hate me so much?' Patrick thought drowsily, not quite sure what he did this time. Although, he had to admit the last time he was alone with Henry things got a little too heated a little too soon.

Grabbing Patrick's upper arm roughly, Henry pinned him up against the tree trunk. Digging his nails into the boy's flesh, he grinned in satisfaction. Being a sadist he simply loved to bring pain to others. Especially younger children. Slitted moons remained in Patrick's skin, leaving thin wells of scarlet where his blood came to the surface. When Henry slid his hand away the blood smudged down Patrick's

arm like thin amounts of warpaint. A moment passed with the older boy staring stoically at Patrick, pondering what he should do to hurt him. The thought of killing Patrick thrilled the greaser! 'I can't kill him here... It's too public.' Henry whispered to himself, mouthing the words under his breath. Patrick looked up at him in confusion. This irritated the greaser to no end. *The baby fag has such long eyelashes! Like a girl!*

'If I see you around again I'll knock your block off! Fuckin' pansy!' Henry eventually decided to say and swung his fist around with no warning. It connected with Patrick's button nose with a dull crunching noise.

The smile faded slowly off the boy's face and turned into a sick grimace. 'Doesn't hurt.' He mumbled haughtily as the greaser gang disappeared. Probably to find bigger and better people to bully. Like the Losers for example. Henry really hated *them*.

Leaning on the sea wall Patrick slipped back into his almost permanent state of vacancy. The bright sun reflected off the deep blue of the sea, and straight into his eyes. It would be a perfect summer day if it wasn't for the blood slowly seeping out of Patrick's nose. Cursing Henry under his breath, Patrick turned around to see a tiny black kitten staring up at him. Her eyes were wide and green, almost like Patrick's own but somehow more vibrant.

Patrick doesn't try to find trouble. No, seemingly trouble seeks him. And this time trouble was in the form of some innocent baby animal. Mewling softly the kitten began to wrap itself around his legs, twisting and turning around in figures of eight. The kitten's fur was so soft and Patrick wanted to run his hands through it just to test it's texture. Cats felt different to dogs you see, and Patrick knew right away he was more of a cat lover. Her purring sounded just like Mr Prendergast's lawn mower to Patrick. He tittered, beginning to imagine what he should do to the poor kitty.

'C'mere little kitty. I won't hurt you!' he leered, pulling out a clammy, pallid hand in greeting. The kitten leapt energetically onto the seawall, and lapped at Patrick's hand affectionately. A cruel, girlish giggle escaped the boy's mouth as he played with it, teasing and petting her fur.

*I would quite like to have a pet cat, thought Patrick, although I'd probably end up killing it.* He cocked his head in the kitten's direction. *Mom wouldn't be pleased,* he added grimly. Suddenly the cat woke him from his thoughts with a sharp nip to the wrist. 'Hey!' Patrick exclaimed as she used him as a launch pad and ran off into the trees.

For a second he considered sprinting after her, but all of a sudden it occurred to Patrick that if he kills even one more animal, he'd be in danger of being sent to the state mental asylum - Juniper Hills. Lots of kids in Patrick's class bullied him, warning him that he'd end up there if he didn't stop acting so strangely. Patrick didn't want to go there - he'd miss his mom too much - but he didn't exactly know how to act 'normal', whatever the definition of normal was. His mom just told him to 'Be yourself!' and the boy couldn't help but think that was the most god-damned awful advice he'd ever heard!

'Henry knows about my secret... I should just go home, forget about it...' He muttered to himself, eyes glued to the pavement, 'He'll tell. And if he does... I'll tell everybody that he broke Eddie's arm!' Being a mostly lonely boy, Patrick often talked to himself. Sometimes in public. It would often get him into trouble at school and sent to his room at home without any dinner.

Students at Derry Elementary have never really seen him with any friends before. Yet just the other day Patrick was hanging out with the infamous Henry Bowers and his cronies! This gave him some odd sort of pride, despite the fact they were almost caught breaking the unfortunate Eddie Kaspbrak's arm. That had been great fun! Patrick had to admit that at least. It was a cheap thrill that had made the world seem less in black, white and grey. A thrill that had made Patrick realise just how much he liked Henry Bowers; how much he wanted to be his greatest friend or even more. Everything between Henry and Patrick had been going fine (they hardly ever got into any fights... well, any *serious* fights) until just yesterday.

That day had changed everything for Patrick... For it was the first time he felt sheer panic. Henry knew... Knew about his test animals! If he should ever tell anyone, Patrick would be taken away with all the other mad children to Juniper Hills. And there's no way in hell Patrick could ever let that happen! He would do whatever it takes to befriend Bowers and keep his secret safe.

Grabbing his leather satchel from a high branch off a tree (Belch Huggins had thrown it up there to add insult to injury) Patrick bounced off home in hopes for iced tea.

## 2. Chapter 2

1

It was almost sundown and the sky blazed in fiery shades of ochre and golden orange. A large, muscular boy with greased black hair was crouching, sweating in the bushes as if to sneak up on someone. He watched as Patrick Hockstetter sprinted off to Derry's Dump. Sweat was running off the younger boy's ghostly face because of the humidity and the skin on the nape of his neck was slick with perspiration. He appeared to be grinning like a Cheshire cat, even from the far distance Henry Bowers was hiding from. Henry shuddered.

'Too bad it's that damn curfew soon.' Henry grumbled under his breath, 'Now I won't get a chance to beat the shit outta Hockstetter!' He waited listening to the cicadas screeching and crying. Two minutes. Five minutes. *Good... Patrick will be so busy with that Corgi puppy he had bundled in his arms, that he won't even notice me.*

Hockstetter had barely even reached the gate before he stopped all of a sudden. He just stood there staring up at the piles of junk and squashed cars towering high above his eye-level. Seagulls laughed overhead as the smell of the dump hit him at full blow. Sea salt was mingled in there somewhere and Henry felt nauseous thinking of all the dead fish and abandoned seaweed on the nearby waste land that the locals called the beach.

Henry could tell Patrick was laughing silently. *Does he know I'm here?!* he panicked, eyes widening as he ducked even further out of sight. Moistening his dry lips, the greaser thought of a plan. *If he turns around now and sees me... I'll kill him. Swear to god I will.*

Promptly, Patrick took off again. His hiking boots teared at the blades of grass as he zipped past faster than before. Henry noticed some variety of plasters and bruises scattered across the boy's milky calves. 'The stupid kid must trip over a lot, runnin' like that!' he snickered, not noticing he was blowing his cover by talking to himself. Henry hardly even knew he was doing it - it just came naturally from his father's influence.

*The only reason I'm here is cuz' I forgot those fucking summer school books from the other day. Bowers thought, Stupid teacher's been nagging me all afternoon. If I just wait for him to go, then I can grab my books and get home. To hell with the curfew!*

However curiosity over took Henry – and he found himself drawn to follow Patrick from a safe distance. It had always intrigued Henry how the boy was so obviously looney-bin-material, yet didn't even know it!

Patrick could feel somebody watching him. It was so darn obvious that he couldn't help but giggle! The Corgi struggled in his grasp (the unfortunate puppy previously called Benji was newly named Mr Chops by the little psychopath carrying him), howling and barking to escape, foaming at the mouth.

'Shut up, Mr Chops!' Patrick squealed giving Mr Chops a soft pinch, 'You're gonna be just fine!' He giggled, giving the puppy his few last cuddles before his inevitable doom. Usually all animals try to escape Patrick's death bottle. Yet only one or two have actually managed to get away! After the animal's finally died Patrick hauls the stiff corpses out and into a nearby bush. Flies are drawn to that part of the dump like a moth to a flame. It surprised Patrick that the police hadn't found the Amana and bush full of stiffness sooner. Sometimes he wondered how long he had left before somebody important came knocking at his front door, demanding to take him away from his mother.

The rusty Amana door creaked open slowly and the sickly sweet smell of death washed over Patrick's face. The odd boy's expression crumpled in disgust, his eyes brightening, zany with shock. 'We really need to clean out here, don't we, Mr Chops?' The puppy barked twice in agreement. The smile on Patrick's face widened to an alarmingly manic grimace. He could hear footsteps now...

'You'll be staying here tonight.' The boy continued, shrilly. He wasn't going to stop for *anybody*. 'Okay?'

'Have fun in there!' Henry heard Patrick titter. He glared and pulled a face as he noticed Patrick's doodles on the floor...One of them was a heart with his initials enclosed within... The rest were of creepy

clowns and other disturbing imagery. His doodles were almost like a young child's but slightly more mature, almost skilled if you were into that kind of sinister art.

'How fuckin' creepy!' Henry remarked, lighting a cigarette with his dad's lighter. All the cool kids did it nowadays... Patrick hesitated. He knew his friend was there, yet he wanted to keep the pretend game going. It was more fun that way! He was just about to grab a rag from nearby when suddenly he felt a clammy hand on his shoulder. Before the boy could peer cautiously around, he found himself lurching forwards and face-planting the ground.

'Jerk!' He yelled, picking himself up. Dust and mud covered his brand new clothes. 'Simpleton.' Henry shot back, glaring over at him. The smell of the corpses was unbearable now. Henry actually felt quite sick.

*How could Patrick love hanging out here? It's disgusting!* the older boy noted. Derry Dump was actually like a second home to the psychopath - he divided his time between his bedroom at home, summer school and the dump. Not many people go here in the middle of July, so Patrick was quite safe to do what he pleases whenever he pleases.

'I want to talk to you, Hockstetter. But most of all, I want you to get something for me, got it!?' Henry decided to take control and break the silence creeping in between them.

The younger boy simply bobbed his head once. His expression was flat and uncaring. *Good. Like I care what Patrick feels.*

'I want you to fuck off, Patrick,' He started, feeling himself getting tense, 'All this time you've been bugging me. Fucking annoying! Why can't you go all creepy on someone else?!" The greaser didn't care that he was sounding childish. Patrick humiliated him in front of his friends so he was gonna have to pay! Anybody else would have been hurt at this cruel rejection. Patrick, however wasn't. He was a terribly emotionally distant child, so not much can get him all worked up. A smile grew on his face instead of the trembling lower lip Henry was anticipating.

'Hurt me if you want, Henry. I don't care...and I... won't leave you alone!' His smile was wide and complacent, 'I'm not scared of you.'

The greaser made as if to hit the boy, but Patrick quickly evaded the punch. 'What did ya want me to find, anyway, Henry?'

All the fury left Henry's mind. 'What're you goin' on about, you fucking pansy?'

*This could be a good opportunity. I could get him to do whatever I wanted.*

## 2

Half an hour had passed, in which Henry watched smugly watched Patrick Hockstetter scrabble about in the junk for his text books. It had taken bit of work to find them of course. The boys loved their school work as much as a monkey loves jazz.

Throughout those thirty minutes both boys had each considered murdering each other. It would be so easy, and who would care if mean old Henry Bowers were to disappear?! To the Derry Police he'd have just been one of the missing... Eddie Corcoran, little Georgie Denbrough, Matthew Clements, Veronica Grogan... Does *anybody* actually know what happened to them, and the morbid fact that they had actually been eaten alive by a clown living in the sewers? Nope, only the Losers Club know about *that* and they aren't exactly keen to share.

Patrick and Henry spent another ten minutes listening to the scratching and whining noises coming from the fridge. Slowly the sounds were beginning to fade... Patrick grinned in satisfaction. His work here was done! Without saying a word, Patrick left the older boy to stare after him as he tore off home. Patrick didn't particularly care for Bowers. Nor did he care to say goodbye to him. To Patrick, social etiquette just didn't come naturally at all! Not much was said in the time the pair spent together, and Henry came to realise that Patrick was one of the quietest people he knew. Despite being quiet and soft spoken, Patrick had almost no basic understanding of manners. Yet neither did Henry, so he didn't particularly mind Patrick's curt demeanour. In fact, the only words that were passed

between the boys were an agreement to meet same time tomorrow in an attempt to salvage more text books.

3

'Good. You're finally here, pansy.' Henry remarked dryly as his younger companion skulked slowly towards him.

Patrick noticed something about his tormentor had changed. Instead of the usual angry blaze in Henry's eyes, there was nothing but fatigue and defeat. His knees were drawn up to his usually strong chest and he was leaning against Patrick's beloved fridge in a slump.

'You're weak.' Patrick whispered huskily, standing over Henry in a daze. He didn't particularly care if his comment sounded rather blunt and unsympathetic, Patrick just wanted to take advantage of the greaser's weak state of mind.

For once Henry didn't feel the need to lie. *Yes. I am weak.* Henry thought dolefully, shuffling further away from the boy. Patrick kept filling all the gaps Henry had put between them. Closer he could see the deep purples and greens Oscar Bowers had left on his son's face.

'Yeah? So what!?' Henry hissed in reply, 'Now are you going to get my books or just fuckin' stare at me?'

Patrick slipped out of his day dream and skipped off to search for a text book about the French Revolution. His sometimes-friend watched him sleepily. In front of Patrick, Henry felt like he could relax. Unlike with Victor and Belch he didn't feel like he had to act big and tough. Closing his eyes, Henry napped lightly for a while. The previous two nights had been hectic with all the visions of monster clowns on the moon. These hallucinations scared Henry witless. Voices whispered to him from all corners of the room, telling him things - things that would drive you to do the craziest of things.

4

A while passed in which Henry woke to find Patrick huddled to his left. The sun was already down and the sky was strewn with purples and blacks. Soon the moon would arrive to take its place... Terror

stabbed at Henry's heart. The entire colour drained from his face, making him look as pale as a frightened ghost.

'Hmm~?' Patrick murmured, peering up at Henry in curiosity. He placed a timid hand on the older boy's lower arm in comfort. (Patrick had often seen his mom do this to his dad when he comes in from work all stressed out.)

Bowers blinked in surprise. 'Don't touch me!' He snarled, slapping his hand away. 'Fine.' Patrick retorted huffily.

The darkness was setting in now – and Henry could see the ghastly moon rising slowly from behind the murky sea. He didn't want to touch Patrick directly, but he needed just a little bit of reassurance... 'Shit...' He muttered and clenched the sleeve of Patrick's cotton T-shirt with an iron grip. His knuckles had turned to white.

You didn't need to be able to see perfectly in the dark to know that Patrick Hockstetter was smirking. Repressing a giggle he attempted to get even closer to Henry, who promptly pushed him away with a garbled trail of insults.

'Not so close, Hockstetter! Fuck off!' He growled giving Patrick one of his infamous Chinese burns on natural impulse (that practically all the kids at Derry Elementary had experienced!), which just made Patrick burst out spluttering with laughter. This simply made Henry even more enraged.

'Fuck you, I'm going home.' Henry hissed, grabbing his text books and rushing through the dump gates, not even waiting to see Patrick's response. The darkened sunflowers nodded lazily in the sudden breeze, causing Henry to flinch. Throughout his journey home, the greaser had a strange sensation ... like something was slinking about in the shadows behind him. Creeping up on him - joining into the confused mix of word salad coming from the moon. The boy couldn't help but to be glad to reach home despite all the hell he goes through in there.

### 3. Chapter 3

1

Gingerly picking up the brilliant red telephone, Henry Bowers considered his two options: Either a) invite Hockstetter to the Aladdin theatre along with Vic and Belch, but give him the wrong time... Or b) just let the little nancy go along with them on a promise he won't do anything to *humiliate* them. This was going to be a hard decision, Henry could tell. Playing with the receiver in his hands, he anxiously considered the possibilities. After a few minutes of hard thinking (Henry isn't exactly the most intelligent or sensitive of boys, you see) he finally came to a conclusion – option 'a'.

He cracked a boyish smirk. *Patrick will be so upset!* Calling up Patrick's number there was nobody home... *Damn!* Tearing off a piece of note paper, Henry scrawled a wildly written note to meet him at the theatre. Grabbing his favourite black leather jacket, Henry jogged out of the house, slamming the door on his way out, and not bothering to tell his father he'd be going out. First he stopped at Patrick's place, shoving the note carelessly through the letter box. Then he called at both Victor and Belch's houses, telling them of the plan and catching the bus together out to downtown Derry.

'Heh! Hockstetter's gonna be so fuckin' bummed when he turns up and can't find us!' Belch chortled as they queued up for tickets. Today they'd be seeing *The Brain Eaters*, a science-fiction that rumour has it – even the adults are too chicken to see!

'Yeah! Why does that pansy even think we're friends anyway? Loser couldn't even hurt a fly!' Victor scoffed. Henry simply grunted in reply – inwardly laughing that Vic thought Patrick couldn't harm a fly.

2

Patrick and his mom had just been out shopping for church clothes. The boy usually loved spending time with his mother as he doesn't usually have any friends to play with, yet today was terribly dull. His mom had made him try practically half the store on! In the end,

they'd come back with next to nothing - Patrick had put on weight he'd found, and his mother had been real sweet about it, yet he could still tell she was somewhat disappointed that he couldn't seem to stay a steady size.

Hopping out the car, Patrick noticed something jamming up the letter box. Carefully prising it out so it wouldn't tear, Patrick spent a good three minutes trying to fathom the chaotic script.

'Meet me at the Aladdin theatre. 3:30. Be on time or we'll leave without you. Henry.' He read aloud. Patrick's heart did a little flip. Clasping the crumpled paper to his chest he beamed widely.

'What are you so happy about, Pat?' Patrick's mom came clicking up behind him, carrying the shopping bags. Reading the note, she smiled with true delight. 'That's great, Patrick! I'm so happy you've finally got your friends! Although... this one needs to improve his spelling a little...'

Patrick Hockstetter bubbled with a joy almost as great as his secret time at Derry's dump! For the next 15 minutes that same smile refused to leave his face. Both his mom and dad were secretly very pleased for him. They'd never seen him so animated before!

'Hey dad, is it okay if I get to the Aladdin a little earlier? I might be late with the traffic.' The boy asked, fingering the buttons of his trench coat in worry. Ronald Hockstetter whole-heartedly agreed, and even dropped Patrick off in his brand-new work car. Kissing his dad goodbye, Patrick stepped out of the car and ran up to where Henry was standing in the queue. He couldn't remember being this happy for quite some time!

### 3

Henry's eyes bulged in shock. 'What's he doin' here!?' Belch hissed in irritation, narrowing his eyes.

'W-wha..?' Henry stammered, looking from Belch to Victor in confusion and glaring. 'I don't-'

'Hey, guys! I came earlier so I wouldn't be late!' Patrick bounded up

to them. His smile was so natural and lit up his whole pallid face. It made him appear almost... cute... The light bounced off his golden blond mane and his olive green eyes were feverishly excited. Tripping over somebody's candy cane-striped sneaker, Patrick almost seemed to explode up to his friends, causing somewhat of a dramatic entrance. 'Mom's bought us lots of candy! Look. Candy buttons. Tootsie rolls! Sky bars... Oh, and red vines! I love those.'

Henry Bowers' facial expression turned grim, and seemed to stay grim until he'd shoved an entire red vine into his mouth. 'Fine. Join us then. Just don't do anything girly, okay?' Patrick agreed nodding his head once.

Everything was going fine until about halfway through the queue when Belch Huggins noticed the Losers club joining at the back. Catching Richie Tozier's four eyes had been just too easy. It's hard to not stand out in a crowd for the Unfortunate ole' Belch! With his abnormal height and a frizzy mop of hair, Belch could be considered strange-looking, yet not quite unattractive. People looked up at him to be strong because of his impressive height, yet he had to admit himself that he was pretty pathetic in a fight. That rock fight from the other week especially - Henry was still mad at him for *that*. Instead of being powerful, Reginald 'Belch' Huggins would more likely be described as somewhat graceful for a teenage boy.

Richie Tozier is well known for having an uncontrollable mouth. At school he has the nickname 'Trashmouth Tozier'. Although, the kids at Derry Elementary had to admit he could be witty sometimes, most of the time he just gets under people's skin! This included Henry Bowers to an almost disturbing level. In fact, Henry hated Tozier and his silly little friends so much, he could easily kill them someday... But not today. Today he'd be good. Today he'd try to igno—

'Hey BOWERS! I heard of you and HOCKSTETTER! Wow!' Richie yelled over the crowds. Many people turned around in curiosity to see who the loud-mouth was. Henry Bowers turned white. Patrick red.

'Y-y-yeah!' Stuttering Bill attempted to holler, 'M-muh-makes s-sense, y-you'd be s-such a guh-guh-good couple!'

'I mean, you're both creepy n' unattractive!' Beverly roared, her auburn hair falling into her eyes. Her cheeks flamed, remembering the time she'd been trapped watching their little 'scene'.

At this, everyone howled laughing. Henry can remember being humiliated many times. Both by his abusive father and the goddamn, hellish Losers Club – but this humiliation had been taken to a new level. All the colour had been drained from his angular face (making him look as pallid as Hockstetter), and his hands shook uncontrollably as he looked down at them expressionlessly. Henry once again considered his options. A) Go kill the Losers. Here. Now. B) Explain using an awful lot of 'French' that he and Hockstetter were certainly NOT together, and that it was actually Trash-mouth Tozier and Stuttering Bill that were the homos here!

A glower worked its way onto Henry's face. Deciding to simply ignore the Losers would seem creepily out of character for Bowers, yet it seemed like the best solution. Maybe the kids in line would think it could be a different Bowers and Hockstetter? Stabbing Tozier a thousand times with his eyes, Henry turned his back and stalked off to get tickets from the cranky lady selling them.

Victor and Belch gave each other a knowing glance. They knew their leader would be in a bad mood all day. Patrick simply looked dazed. Letting out a shaky breath he followed Henry into the theatre. The other two greasers trailed behind in a slouch. This really wasn't going to be much fun.

#### 4

Henry supposed the movie would've been enjoyable if it wasn't for that goddamn Hockstetter with his perverted ways. He'd intentionally attempted to sit as far away from Patrick as possible. No such luck. Patrick had slipped in between Victor and Henry in a heartbeat.

At school, Patrick was well known to be rather deviant. Mrs Reichs had promptly moved Patrick away from the girls, and Patrick simply moved onto the boys! Patrick knew his parents had a call home about this matter... It'd taken a lot of explaining to fully trick his father. He wasn't *that* stupid, you see. He knew something bad would happen if his parents found out he liked boys as much as he liked the girls.

Thorough out The Brain Eaters, Patrick had constantly ran his hand up and down Henry's thigh in the dark. This really freaked the greaser out - and he'd ended up sadistically twisting Patrick's hand backwards in displeasure. *Crack!* Patrick giggled complacently. Belch turned round to see what all the noise was about (the movie was just getting to a good part!).

His face twisted in confusion.

'Eh, Vic. I think Henry n' the pansy are holding hands!' He nudged his friend and hissed into his ear, '*Queers!*' Usually Belch Huggins would always be so fiercely loyal to his pal, Henry, but in front of Victor he didn't really feel the need. Henry was going mad, so what was the point? Henry was slowly drifting away from them, closing them off and letting nobody else in; he was so obsessed with his father currently that he was finding it difficult to talk to other people.

'Gross!' Victor Criss smirked, thinking it was rather amusing that somebody like Henry would engage in such an act – and with Hockstetter too! From the angle the boys were sitting at, it certainly looked as if they were holding hands, but actually Henry was trying his hardest to fracture Patrick's wrist. Patrick squirmed in slight discomfort. It didn't hurt, but it didn't feel good either; and he wasn't quite sure if he dug this sensation. Pain, just like other intense feelings, doesn't come easily to Patrick Hockstetter.

## 5

'Well, I've got to leave now. Dad said he'd ground me if I'm too late for dinner...' Patrick mumbled to the pavement, saddened that he'd have to leave his friends so soon. 'So bye, Henry! I love you!' he added suddenly and careered off, howling with childish laughter.

*He's gonna be so mad at me now!* the boy puffed under his breath – leaving the greasers to gaze after him in mixed confusion and distaste.

'Oooh! Looks like somebody's got a crush~!' Victor chortled. His face was flushed a pale scarlet and tears threatened to spill from his sapphire eyes. Secretly both Victor and Belch thought this was rather hilarious. *What the hell was Bowers doing fuckin' around with that*

*nancy?!*

Belch joined in snickering, 'Yeah, Henry! What was all that about? We saw you guys in the cinema, doin'... y'know...!'

Henry freezed up, thinking Belch meant Patrick's constant pawing. 'He's freaking me out, man. I don't know what to do about him,' Lowering his voice he added, 'Patrick's gonna ruin my reputation if we don't do something about it!'

There was a moment of silence to ponder this awful possibility. Henry now had Victor and Belch's full attention. 'Also... he could ruin *all* our reputations! Do you want everyone we know to think we're all homos?!'

Belch examined his sneakers, 'Jesus! Do people really think you n' Hockstetter are queers?'

'Fuck! Fuck, I don't know! The little shit fancies me and that's all. That Beverly bitch has told all her loser boyfriends about that time when Pat-' Henry clamped a clammy hand over his mouth before he could reveal anything else. His friends didn't press for details. Henry would tell all in his own time. Force it outta him, and he'd get real mad. It's best just to let him sulk for a while in Victor's opinion. Besides, the boys knew it would probably be something disgusting that they'd *really* rather not know about!'

Bowers was becoming edgier and edgier by the minute. 'I don't like him though, just so you know.' He looked up at the cloudy blue sky in an attempt to calm himself down. He squinted as the sun hit his eyes, and swore he could see a clown's outline glowering at him from the light. 'Fuckin' pansy.' He added spitefully and ran off home to get away from the situation. He'd rather not talk about love with his friends. He was too cool for that! *Especially homo love!* Henry repressed a shudder.

6

*Fwack!* Henry's poor face was red and swollen before he'd even gotten through the front door.

'What?!" he screeched, holding a hand to his tender cheek. His brown-black eyes overflowed with tears. Attempting to blink them back just made things worse... They rolled down his face, big and fat. Salt water stung where Oscar Bower's ring had connected with the space underneath Henry's eye.

Mr Bowers wore an inexplicable expression. The TV buzzed faintly in the background in all its black and white glory. Henry tried to focus in on the noise the TV was making instead of facing his estranged father; Marilyn Monroe was singing in her iconic sultry alto.

'If I hear of you fuckin' around with any more fags, I'll mess you up, boy. Do you understand?!" Oscar Bowers took the cigar out of his stained lips, and broke the silence (in between his son's quiet sobbing and Marilyn's 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy'). In the man's deranged opinion, his 14 year-old son was nothing more than a useless pup. A farm boy. A delinquent, and even worse, the offspring of his previous wife.

The poor boy had not even a clue how his father knew about Patrick! His hands trembled weakly and his breath came out in whimper-y sobs. At school, Henry was such a bully, to the Losers, to the kindergartners, even the teachers were slightly afraid of him. There was only one person to render Henry completely powerless – and this was his father. He'd been abused, beaten, insulted and tormented by his father for most of his years until he felt completely worthless. His friends couldn't remember a day where Henry hadn't slumped into his desk covered in a rainbow-variety of bruises, his face melancholy and etched with small cuts where his father's ring had caught it.

Oscar slipped back into the living room to watch TV. Marilyn was cut off and transformed into the soft hum of *Tom and Jerry*. His son slammed the door and decided it would be best to avoid Oscar for the rest of the day, unless he'd like to have a broken limb or something. That would certainly put a downer on the rest of the summer holidays! It was the middle of July, and Henry had done literally nothing all that fun. Intimidating the Losers was the best thing he'd done all holiday! Chucking his jacket on the floor as it was getting so much hotter outdoors, Henry backhanded his tears and swaggered out into his street. Passing Bip and Bop, his father's pigs, he gave a flick to temple of the biggest of the pigs.

'Stupid pigs! You remind me of Fat Boy Ben!' He hollered down at them, 'Well, you'll be bacon soon, just like the Losers!' Bip simply grunted in reply, lazy eyes rolling back to it's dinner.

Lighting a cigarette in the shield of his hands, he puffed out wistfully. His eyes were red and swollen from crying. *Hopefully Belch n' Victor won't come by. That would be humiliating!* Henry mused, leaning over the bridge and peering cautiously into the murky water. Imagining the Creature from the Black Lagoon floating in there, just waiting to rip his head off gave the greaser the chills, so he turned around and was quite startled to be nose to nose with none other than Patrick Hockstetter!

Patrick giggled in his typical self-satisfied manner. 'Hello, Henry!'

'What the fuck are you doing here?!'

'Why are you crying?'

Henry paused, torn between beating the boy to within an inch of his life, or venting about what had happened with his father.

'Why are you bleeding?' He retorted, oblivious to the fact that actually, he was bleeding too.

'What? Oh, this isn't mine...' Patrick muttered, rubbing his forehead and gazing at the blood on his hand in confusion. He sucked his fingers just to make Henry uncomfortable.

'So... What's wrong, anyway?' He asked timidly, gazing up at Henry and blinking rapidly.

'Heh! Nothing's wrong with *me*. You're the one who needs his fucking head checking!'

'Hmmph.' Patrick huffed, blowing a strand of fringe out of his eyes, 'You're such a liar.'

Henry said nothing to this. He wasn't going to deny it. A part of him did want to mention what had happened to make him so upset. He felt like he could tell Patrick anything, it's not like he had any other friends to blab to! Also... he didn't have to act cool like he did with

Vic and Belch. They were good friends – fierce and loyal – but he couldn't really tell them anything that would make him seem weak, and to Henry, being abused by his father was a sign of weakness. Often he would see Victor out with his dad, playing baseball, or going out for hamburgers, and it made him so envious. He wished he could have a relationship like that with his dad!

Out and about he would find Patrick out shopping with his mom. She was pretty and very feminine with a haircut like Audrey Hepburn! When Henry went to Patrick's for tea once, his mother had answered the door, and Henry couldn't help but wish he was her son. She'd smiled sweetly and taken his jacket. Her perfume was peach and cherry blossom, a fruity-floral smell that Henry wanted to get more of. It was beautiful compared with Rena, his dad's icky girlfriend's aroma of BO and grease. When he was 10 years-old, his mother had ran away from Oscar's abuse, and good on her. Henry Bowers prayed that she would've taken him with her as she'd gone. But when he'd woken up the next day, it was like she'd never even been there after 10 long years.

'Heeyy....? Henry? Are you alright?' Patrick interrupted him from his pensive state.

'No. I feel like we're being watched. Let's leave.' Henry whispered, feeling the sad thoughts wash over him, making him weak and tired.

Patrick's expression went dark with paranoia 'Want to sleep over? You won't have to go home.' He offered, a smile attempting to turn the corners of his mouth.

'What the hell! No! I'd rather sleep in a goddamn bush than sleep with you!' Henry spat, turning away from Patrick slightly. His face was flushed all over, making Patrick titter.

'Well, let's go to the dump instead!~'

'Yeah, hopefully we'll run into those Losers again. I feel like throwing around a couple of fuckers...!' Henry bellowed, seemingly perking up a little at Patrick's suggestion. Patrick smiled, satisfied, and carefully slipped his hand into Henry's. It was so discrete that Henry didn't even notice, or maybe even care.

As the two boys walked hand in hand to Derry's dump, not one of them noticed a clown-like face, slick with white greasepaint, slide above the water's surface, and slowly slip back, obscured by the dark, filthy water. Under the river, Pennywise was leering. He certainly had something planned for those moronic little brats!

## 4. Chapter 4

1

'Hey, Henry, d' you wanna see my fridge?' Patrick beamed up at Henry Bowers; grabbing his arm flirtatiously, and almost skipping in an attempt to cover up his trip over his laces. He was mostly doing this to keep up with Henry's breakneck stride... but also because he wanted to get on his nerves. This was very easy in Patrick's opinion! Every syllable, every complacent smile, every slight brush of Patrick's skin against his own irked Henry to no end. Just before, Henry had almost slapped the little pansy out of embarrassment when he finally realised he'd been holding his hand the whole way to the dump!

'I already know about the Amana, Pat.' Henry lowered his voice to a deadly, icy tone he'd typically reserve for a member of the Losers Club. Glaring down at Patrick, he saw an element of surprise on the boy's face. 'What, have you forgotten already, lamebrain? I've known for ages now!'

Patrick remained sullenly silent. Henry mentally urged him to pout, just to give him a reason to split the wacko's lip.

'If you tell anyone about us... Or touch me in public again; even just a little bit...I will make sure everyone else knows. And you know what...? They'll send you to the fucking A-Loony bin, Hockstetter!' Henry sneered, giving his unfortunate companion a playful push.

Stumbling from the push, Patrick toppled over sideways and fell on his behind, making Henry howl with callous laughter. Grinning boyishly, Patrick picked himself up and launched at Henry, pushing him to the ground and pinning him down under his body. Henry burst out giggling, attempting to tear his friend's tightly clamped fingers from off of his neck. He turned flushed in the face from laughing so hard. Giving up on removing Patrick's hands, he began light-heartedly giving him small punches to the gut. Patrick could tell Henry was going to ruin all his fun by escaping, so he sat firmly down on his stomach and pinned his hands down with his knees.

'Patrick, that's not fair!' Henry whined, the smile fading from his face.

'Oh, shut up!' Patrick tittered, 'You did this to Eddie, so why can't I do this to you?' The boy held the 'o' at for least three seconds longer than he was supposed to. 'Besides! This is fun!'

'Not for me, fuck-face!' Henry yelled boisterously, trying to keep his face serious, but the smile was far too strong to hold back.

'See, you *do* like this!' Patrick exclaimed, raising his hands temporarily from Henry's wide shoulders. Bowers took advantage of the moment, and wrestled Patrick underneath him despite all the squealing and complaining.

'Look, I don't like this... And let me show you what happens when you mess with someone like me, Hockstetter.' There was a pause... Henry was thinking, yet he got distracted by his surroundings. The sunflowers were swaying in the breeze, sunlight bouncing off their citron petals. Everything on this summer's day seemed alive and animated, the sea breeze being the puppet master of nature.

Snapping out of his daze, Henry recoiled as Patrick's lips were against his in an instant. In surprise his mouth opened. Pulling roughly away, he gripped Patrick's face forcefully in his hand.

'Are you crazy?! Why did you just...!' He spluttered, rubbing at his mouth and resisting Patrick's almost desperate attempts to free his face.

'You're the craziest out of both of us!' Patrick retorted, moistening his lips then gasping and struggling in Henry's iron grasp, 'Besides, if you tell *anyone* about my fridge and test animals, I'll tell *everyone* at Derry Elementary that you liked it when I touched you!' He let out a gaily laugh that gave Henry the chills. 'You don't scare me, Bowers!' Despite all the tough talk coming from Patrick, Henry could tell by the agitated glint in his eyes that he was mildly frightened at least. It didn't take a genius to realise this... Dirty blond hair covered Patrick's pallid face as he attempted to throw Henry off of himself.

'Pfft~ Says the guy that kills animals for kicks. Don't make me laugh! And I didn't *like* it!' the greaser raked an anxious hand through his dark hair. Patrick stared dumbly at his older friend for longer than what made Henry comfortable. It was almost as if he was begging for

a broken jaw or a black eye!

'He-'

'Shut up!' Henry eventually cut Patrick off, 'I hear something...'

Alarming wild fury grew in Henry's eyes. 'Come out you little shits!' he screamed furiously into the silence, 'I know you're hiding from me!' Only the birds showed themselves, flying out of the pines and into the distance.

'Henry, what's wrong now?' Sighed Patrick, feigning melancholy. Henry didn't even notice Patrick's comment. He was breathing fast. Too fast.

'I'm worried about you, Henry.' Patrick lied. Linking his arm with the greaser's, he leaned his head against Henry's shoulder, closing his eyes and exhaling softly. 'Let me show you something...' Taking Henry by the hand, he led him over to the Amana, giggling silently.

In Henry's opinion, the refrigerator had seen much better days. It loomed over the boys, white and eerily stark in contrast to the rest of the dump. Rust licked the surface, curling up and around the paint. The sickly sweet and somehow acidic smell of decomposing flesh was almost too much to bear. Flies buzzed fanatically in the silence... 'I bet they're having a right fun time.' Henry remarked snidely.

'Yeah. We love it here~' Patrick commented emotionlessly. Henry glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. *Was that a hint of boredom in his voice?*

Sliding his hand onto the fridges handle, Patrick grinned. 'Are you ready for this?'

Neither Henry nor Patrick could have ever been prepared for what was about to take place... A high pitched wheezy, maniacal laugh rang in the silence like a gunshot – then there was nothing to hear but hysterical screaming.

2

Henry's heart stopped. Curled up in that goddamn Hockstetter's fridge

was no other than Eddie Corcoran! Eddie had been an old pal of Henry's, and understandably, when Eddie disappeared, Henry hadn't exactly expected to find him here of all places. But that wasn't all! There was a girl... Cissy, Greta? No... Trying to place a name to the girl took a lot of thinking. She was crammed up against the roof of the Amana, her hair brushing against Eddie's frigid, dead face. A cold sweat covered Henry's furrowed brow. Turning to his living friend, he could see Patrick wasn't exactly thrilled to see Corcoran here either.

Orange pompoms bounced out – a cheerful comparison to the morbid contents of the Amana. The children's clothes were bloodied red and riddled with tears and grave wax. Eddie's face was practically non-existent in Henry's eyes. Back in spring, Henry would see Eddie's face almost every day; dark, dopey eyes, long-ish lashes, olive skin and soft facial features. Now he could only lay eyes on pink ropes of muscle and a yellow fatty substance. Sure enough, there were those old brown eyes gazing emptily into nothingness. This was the only thing the boys could use to distinguish him from.

Patrick found himself lost for words. He couldn't imagine why there'd be his old class mates in *his* fridge. He didn't do anything to them! Okay, sometimes he would pull on the chick's hair during algebra... But he wouldn't put them in the old Amana! A grin forced its way onto his face; to Patrick, it looked as if the corpses were cuddling up together!

'What the fuck are you laughing for?! Eddie's dead in *your* fridge, Hockstetter!' Henry barked, 'And who is this girl? What did you do to them?!"

'N-no... Henry. I don't know!' Patrick felt choked up inside. He could tell Henry thought that he'd killed the kids. 'Is that... Veronica Grogan?'

Staring closely at the doll-like, vacant bodies, Henry flinched as Grogan's wrist gave a little twitch. Though his natural impulse was adios, Henry stayed put. It was eerily fascinating what death could do to somebody. Both boys watched in scared silence, one terrified of an un-dead apocalypse, the other contemplating poking the kids with a stick.

'So, what d'ya reckon we do?' Henry finally mustered up the courage to say. He wiped his sweaty palms on his blue jeans.

Patrick stared glassily at his companion, '...We should leave. People might think *we* did this.'

Biting his lip, Henry grunted an agreement. He turned to leave-

'Wait! Maybe we should bury them. Don't want the cops sniffing around!' Patrick hollered to his retreating back, his face enigmatic. Henry had never seen Patrick look so energised before.

'Heh, idiot, that would look really suspicious. No way. We're leaving.'

'Fine. Have it your way.' Patrick grumbled in reply. As he trudged over to Henry, he saw something in his eyes that he didn't exactly like.

'What's-'

A horrified moan escaped Henry's lips. Whipping around to face the problem, Patrick's eyes widened. *This isn't even possible. Only in double features.*

Standing hand in hand in front of the fridge, like boyfriend and girlfriend were Eddie Corcoran and Veronica Grogan. Identical simpers plastered their pallid faces.

Veronica's yellow and white checked swing dress swayed in the sudden breeze. Flies swarmed at her skin and covered her like barnacles on a rock.

Henry fought off the urge to throw up, but he could ashamedly feel something trickle down his legs. He desperately wanted to run off home, where safety and comfort would be limited, yet much better than his current situation. As much as he wanted to leave Patrick to fight these silent monsters on his own, Henry was frozen to the spot. His legs were as heavy as lead... and he felt as if he moved just a little bit; he would surely collapse and get torn to shreds by these zombies.

Eddie clutched pompoms in his upturned palm. He relaxed and let

the wind carry them off towards the south.

'Hello, Henry Bowers. Remember me?' Corcoran smiled pleasantly, his eyes complacent but the rest of his face a bloodied mess. 'We were buddies... Before my accident.'

'Patrick.' Veronica Grogan acknowledged his presence, 'It's been a long time.'

Cowering and whimpering, Henry pivoted around as if to flee. Patrick simply watched in a calm silence, in awe of the whole crazy, almost *ridiculous* situation. Without even looking, he grabbed Henry's wrist forcefully as he was just about to get away.

'Stay.' He hissed under his breath, 'They might have something important to say!'

Creeping closer, and closer, and closer, Patrick noticed the way Eddie and Veronica's footsteps mirrored each other. It was almost as if they were twins sharing a mind. Tears pooled in Henry's eyes for the second time today. Feeling Henry's resistance, Patrick clenched his hand as hard as he could.

'Don't let him get away.' Eddie chuckled, 'I think he'll like what we have to say, if you'd just give us a chance.' Extending a scaly, rotten hand towards Bowers, as if by magic a brown card box appeared. It was only big enough to carry matches, yet Patrick could tell there was something not right about the box. A foul stench emitted from the paper.

*Don't take it! Don't take it, Henry!* Patrick mentally urged, digging his nails into Henry's flesh.

Henry's hand hesitated mid-air. Trembled. He grasped the package, very careful not to touch the un-dead boy's hand. The greaser looked down at the object as if it was an artifact from an alien planet. Again he hesitated.

'Don't open it now. You can only open it when you have Pennywise's permission. This may take a while. It depends...' Veronica warbled emotionlessly, sounding alarmingly like an electronic recorded

message.

Eddie giggled. It sounded distant and un-genuine. 'It depends.' He echoed, 'Depends how good a boy you've been!'

'Yes. We have one for you too, Patrick Hockstetter.' Veronica said flatly, shoving the parcel into Patrick's reluctant hands.

Neither of the boys wanted to speak. They were far too scared, paralysed with fear.

'What's the matter, Henry? Cat got your tongue? Usually at school you just won't shut up!'

A whimper escalated in Henry's throat. *Why do they want to speak to us? What the fuck are in these parcels? They smell like something died in there!*

'Anyway, we have to pass on a message.' Eddie interrupted his thoughts abruptly, placing a spare hand on Henry's shoulder. Jerking away from the touch, Henry let out a small scream.

Both corpses laughed like electronic dolls, their voices sounding foreign. Turning to Henry, 'You know Pennywise – don't you?'

'W-who?' His voice trembled and cracked, bringing more malicious laughing.

'Don't tell me you don't know Pennywise! He's that clown you see on the moon every night!' Eddie exclaimed, slapping a hand to his forehead. Small droplets of blood sprayed Patrick's white T-shirt. Both boys gasped.

'How the fuck did you-' Henry seemingly claimed back some of his usual confidence.

'This isn't necessary.' Veronica rasped, her eyes blazing, 'Pennywise knows everything about you, and that's all I can say... Right now we have an important thing to tell you, if you'd just be quiet and stop your snivelling.'

Henry shut up immediately. Typically he wouldn't let anybody order

him around, especially a girl! But today was much different. He wished he could have some of Patrick's calm nature. It sure would come in handy.

'Pennywise has orders, you see. We are simply a messenger, so please don't be afraid.' Eddie grinned grimly. For a second, Patrick thought he saw a glint of sympathy in his eyes. *Must have been my imagination*, he thought sadly.

'For weeks this has been bothering him. Getting on his nerves. It's the cause of everyone's problems, I'm sure you'd agree. The Losers Club. Stupid kids, every one of them! At first ol' Pennywise thought the problem would blow over. The Losers would die easily – either by his hands or yours, and everything would smooth over.'

'However, little by little Pennywise has noticed things. The Losers are far stronger than anyone could have imagined! Every day the Losers are getting closer to killing our leader, Henry. Not only would it kill him, but all of us children too, Henry!'

Part of Henry wanted to yell that Corcoran was already dead, and he had no idea who this 'Pennywise' was; but mention of the Losers had caught his interest. This was rare for him.

'Last evening, Pennywise thought of a plan. This is where *you* come in, boys.' Veronica smiled for the first time, 'Forgive me if I'm wrong, but you detest the Losers, right?'

'Y-yes...'

'We all want you to kill the Losers. No, we *need* you to kill them!' Eddie laughed carelessly, clapping his hands together. Patrick watched numbly as flakes of skin floated to the ground.

'Bring them to us when you're done!' With that, they were gone. Clasping their hands together, Eddie and Veronica faded into the distance and into the Barrens. The pines hid their ghastly bodies from view.

goodbye. He was too lost in thought to bother with conversation.

At Patrick's window, Josephine Hockstetter numbly wondered if the boys had fallen out. Both seemed really blue.

'Hey, Patty. Why do you look so down?'

Her son ignored her, shuffling past her in the corridor and retreating to his bedroom. *Must be a teenage thing*. She brushed it off.

#### 4

*It sure has gotten dark fast!* Henry thought to himself. It seemed like just a few hours ago that he's met Patrick by the kissing bridge after the cinema.

Just like every evening, the ghost moon sure as hell appeared. Sitting illuminated in the moonlight on a park bench, the word 'kill' echoed around Henry's distressed head. Deadened determination slotted into place.

Henry would make it his mission to murder the Losers Club. Every. Single. Last. One of them.

## 5. Chapter 5

1

Henry Bowers awoke feeling refreshed and cheerful. Despite sleeping rough in the park, it had been the best night's sleep he'd had in a long, long time. The birds had woken him with a sweet song and Maine's New England temperature just kept getting hotter. *Screw summer school. I don't want to go on a day like this!*

*All I want to do is curl up and listen to rock 'n' roll. But today I have work to do.* He sighed, reaching into his jeans pocket and withdrawing his trademark switchblade. Metallic pink and blue hues glinted in the morning sunlight.

Footsteps pitter-pattered out of Henry's field of vision, 'Hey, Daddy-O.'

'Yo, Patrick. You ready for today?'

'You know it!'

Henry flashed his teeth, 'Great! Let's beat the living hell outta them!'

2

Half an hour later, the boys were crouched like American Indians in the bushes. Cramps snaked up Patrick's legs but he didn't bother complaining. *All would be good when the Losers are dead!*

Something in Patrick's head had clicked into place over night. Despite being dangerously deluded, Patrick knew he had no choice; *Henry and I were meant to kill the Losers! This 'Pennywise' whoever he is, could be our destiny. After all, I am the only real person in existence, so maybe this Pennywise is my real father-*

'I think they're coming.' Henry whispered silkily in Patrick's ear. He turned to catch his eyes, 'Don't say a word.'

Smirking feverishly, Patrick bounced up and down in excitement. He could hardly wait!

'W-wuh-want t-to go d-dow-n-n to t-the p-pier, guh-guys?' Bill stammered, pivoting round to beam at his friends.

'Sure. Why not.' Ben offered, panting in the heat.

Beverly Marsh skipped eagerly behind Bill, 'We could get ice cream and eat it listening to my new records. Anybody like Buddy Holly?' Her red hair glistened radiantly in the sun.

'Th-that's gr-great, B-B-Bevvie.' Bill smiled directly at her, making her blush with pleasure. Henry noticed Ben's slightly hurt expression from the bushes and snickered.

Stanley Uris's prim trouser cuff just skimmed the leaves of the bush Henry and Patrick were crouched in. The greaser's heart thundered with anticipation. *Now!*

Eddie Kasbrak squealed in bewilderment, his eyes wide with terror. All too suddenly, he was on the grass, sprawled out and pathetically defenceless with grass stains plastered to his pristine alabaster shirt.

The other five losers stood staring, too stunned to react. Cries of 'Holy hell!' and 'Jesus Christ!' were murmured, but Henry was too lost in his own world to notice.

*Kill the Losers. Kill them all, Henry. Henry, kill them! We'll all die! Kill them, please! For us, Henry.*

'Oi! Fags! What do ya think you're doing!?' Richie roared, interrupting Henry from slicing the little pansy. Henry froze, knife already poised above his head. All of a sudden, his demented eyes locked on Richie. Narrowed. Rolled away.

*Please, Henry. I'm begging you! Kill them... Kill them all. It doesn't matter how or when, just do it! Please!*

'Cut it out!' Beverly shrieked, shrilly, hands cupping her face in horror.

Eddie screamed and cried, tears dripping down his pasty face,

collecting on his collar and Henry's fingertips. His friends attempted to throw Henry off of the young boy, yet were failing miserably. Bowers was too strong. Patrick Hockstetter watched serenely from a distance... Waited, and Eddie could see out of the corner of his eye that Patrick was edging closer and closer, hands clasped together in front of his waist. As always, Patrick was looking sadistically delighted.

Patrick giggled childishly. Mike could practically see him shaking with adrenaline, 'Kill him now, Henry! The clown's saying he will hurt us if we let them get away...'

'H-hey! H-how d-d-do y-you know a-about-' Bill began, flinching in surprise.

'Shut up! Little shit!' Henry looked up at the moon, a pale ghost in the morning sky. His brow furrowed and he averted his eyes fearfully.

Eddie's eyes grew wide as Henry's blade came closer and closer to his quivering face. Ben looked as if he were about to be sick – there was nothing they could do. Henry Bowers was not only strong, but he was crazy... Juniper Hills material for sure! He was just bout to give up all hope – Eddie Kaspbrak was a goner...

Unexpectedly, pebbles and small rocks rained down on Henry. Ben let out a small laugh without any amusement. *Of course! How could I forget? Henry hated that rock fight last week! We had him beat so bad!*

'Let him go, you bastard!' Beverly screeched between tears, her eyes wild with fury. It was her that had thrown those stones! Ben's heart skipped a beat. Gathering rocks in the folds of his T-shirt, Ben gestured for his gang to do the same. Bowers' smug smile turned instantly into a snarl as a jagged rock bounced off his side.

Ignoring the rock, Henry began to cut into Eddie's poor wrists. Wheezing and sobbing, Eddie squirmed desperately under Henry's body. Unfortunately for Eddie, the older boy just wouldn't budge. Being muscular, Henry had to weigh at least twice Eddie's weight. More rocks were propelled through the air, at both Henry and Patrick – many of them being successful.

*Please, please let me go!* Eddie mentally begged. Blood was now spurting out at an alarmingly fast rate and Eddie's asthma was worse than ever before.

Richie attempted to throw Henry off of Eddie a second time, and would have succeeded if it weren't for that damn Patrick Hockstetter, Henry's stupid lapdog. Placing his hands firmly against Eddie's shoulder blades, Patrick held him down at one end, peering down tenderly into the boy's face. He looked almost like a nurse, holding down a sick person for further tests; firm yet gentle. Rocks bounced off Patrick's head and face, leaving small bloody wells. Emotionlessly, Patrick continued to look into Eddie's eyes. He was savouring the moment... A stone hit the boy square between the eyes and he didn't even flinch! It was at that moment that Bill Denbrough realised something; Patrick Hockstetter was screwy! Even more so than Henry Bowers... If that was even possible!

Ripping Eddie's shirt open, Henry placed his blade against his neck. Eddie could feel the cool against his skin. Begging wasn't an option - *Henry's going to kill me now. I wish I could've at least said goodbye to my mother.* Hesitating, Henry looked across at Patrick and offered a false smile. 'Patrick, don't you want a go? I can't have *all* the fun!'

It was at that moment that Eddie seized his opportunity. Rolling sideways, he escaped Henry and Patrick's grasp. Patrick swiftly grabbed his ankle and pulled him back across the grass, leaving a thin trail of blood behind. Bugs and dirt rubbed against his shirt and crawled into his hair. Eddie cried even harder and attempted to kick out at his tormentors.

'Hey, rock man. Think ya could get away? Too bad, *baby*. We're going to kill you, and your pathetic friends.' Henry snarled, pinning him back down again. Out of nowhere, before Henry could even think about cutting into the loser's skin, Patrick was knocked sideways in a surprise attack.

Hockstetter's face didn't even register a single mark of surprise as blood seeped rapidly out his nose.

Releasing Eddie, Henry furiously peered around to see who the attacker was. Denbrough. Eddie didn't even matter anymore. It was

Bill Denbrough's turn now!

'Fucker, you really shouldn't have done that.' Henry laughed dryly, grabbed Bill forcefully by the shoulder and pulled him closer to his face. 'Would you like a turn now, fuck face? Sure! Shit!'

Bill bravely glowered back into Henry's eyes as Eddie crawled slowly away to Beverly's comforting arms, sobbing as he went. He pressed his switch blade slowly into the boy's neck. Bill squirmed and writhed desperately in the older boy's grasp. Thankfully for Bill, a car with a young married couple passed by. The woman hopped delicately out the car, poodle skirt and petticoat billowing as she ran. Her husband slammed the car door and joined her side, frowning worriedly.

'Are you boys okay?' She asked cautiously as she caught sight of Eddie covered in blood and crying, and Patrick's spouting nose.

'Yes ma'am we're just okey-dokey. Thank you for asking.' Patrick smiles coldly. His eyes were dull and full of black emptiness. The lady glanced at Patrick doubtfully and turned to go back to her car – after all, it was none of her business! *Just some stupid little kids fighting!*

'NO!' Beverly screamed, 'He's got a knife! They're going to kill us!' She pointed at Henry whose face quickly turned from a handsome smile into a furious snarl.

'You BITCH!' Henry hollered, lunging at her and revealing his knife. The man gasped, his face displaying pure fear.

'You just leave those children alone now, boy!'

'Please just go home,' his wife pleaded, realising she was dealing with someone not quite in his right mind, 'Or we'll call the cops!'

'You leave.' Patrick says coolly, joining Henry's side and linking his arm through his.

Henry fumed silently to himself as he came to a decision, 'C'mon, Pat. Let's go.'

Patrick nodded once and walked pessimistically next to his older friend, head bowed. Everyone watched them leave, 'Psychopaths...

Someone should inform their parents and send them to a home.' The wife whispered softly to her husband when the boys were a safe distance away.

'Are you kids alright?'

4

Upon reaching Patrick's road, Henry crashed to the pavement, head in his hands. 'SHIT! SHIT! SHIT! SHIT! We almost had them. If those old biddies hadn't stuck their fucking noses in, we could have killed them!'

Patrick knelt on the ground beside him and ran his hands through Henry's hair, placing his cheek next to his. 'Pennywise won't be happy.' He agreed sombrely, his eyes deeply saddened for once in his life. Henry sighed worriedly and rested his pounding head against Patrick's lap, lying down. Patrick stroked his hair comfortingly.

'If we don't kill them next time, we're gonna be murdered, Patrick.'

## 6. Chapter 6

1

'Hey! You're that Hockstetter!'

Patrick pivoted on the spot to see who his harasser was. He hadn't recognised the voice, and certainly didn't know the boy's face.

'Yeah. So what? How do you know my name?'

The older boy scoffed in malice, 'Pfft! Everybody knows you!' He came a little closer and Patrick could tell he wasn't someone to mess with. Tattoos snaked up his burly tan arms and he had to be somewhere around 6 ft. 5. Even taller than Belch Huggins!

'You're that boy from the theatre. Heh! If you can even call yourself a boy, that is.' Smirking, he added, 'How's ya boyfriend, huh? Crazy son of a gun, right?'

Without warning, the older boy was suddenly on top of Patrick, kneeling on his back and pinning his arm down in front of his face. Patrick couldn't even cry out. If he attempted to, gravel would surely fill his mouth and make him sick.

*I'm not gonna give him that satisfaction- I'm not gonna let him think he can hurt me, because he can't! I'm not gonna scream for help because-*

A very faint pain skimmed against Patrick's forearm. *I can't see what's happenin' but I know he's got a blade.* Small beads of blood ran down Patrick's pasty arm. He could feel an 'F' ...An 'A'-

'Rogers! What's goin' on?'

*Henry.*

Patrick heard a slight tone of discomposure in the boy's voice, 'Bowers, umm-'

'Let him go, man. Cruelty to animals, huh?' Henry's mouth twisted into a half-smile, 'Wouldn't expect a guy like you to go after pansies!'

Leave this cocksucker to me, alright.'

'Sure...' Rogers scratched his head anxiously, 'He's all yours.' Henry grabbed Patrick's hand and dragged him roughly to his feet.

'Good. I'll see ya around.'

Henry turned as if to ask the younger boy if he was alright, but Patrick had already fled the scene.

## 2

'Good morning... You're...Henry, right?' Mrs Hockstetter had answered the door upon the first ring, gorgeous and heavily-perfumed per usual.

Henry beamed, 'Yes, ma'am. Is Patrick home?' Today he was wearing rolled up Levis and his pink leather jacket – the one with the patriotic eagle spread across his shoulder blades. Josephine Hockstetter raised a speculative eye brow.

'Yes, I'll get him now!' Josephine chirped, clasping her hands to her breast delightedly and calling up the stairs. 'Patrick! Your friend's here.'

Patrick trailed down shyly, holding his tender arm in his left hand. Upon seeing Henry, he winced and looked as if he wanted almost anybody else to be standing on his doorstep. Even Mrs Reichs!

Relaxing against the balcony, Henry offered his trademark smirk. 'D'ya wanna come out and play?'

Mrs Hockstetter could tell her son was about to refuse his offer, so quickly jumped in, and a good thing she did, too. 'Patrick would love to, wouldn't you, sweetheart!'

'Umm, yeah. I guess so...' Patrick shrugged. It didn't matter to him if he went out to play with Henry. Either way, he'd still wind up bored and frustrated. 'Well, bye mom. I'll be back soon.' Wrapping his arms around Henry's neck, Patrick grinned. Henry noticed a brief look of confusion on Patrick's mom's face, and shifted away slightly, embarrassed.

'Remember, your father and I are going out for the night. Be careful and get back home before curfew. That goes for you too.' His mother shot back, and turned towards Henry in hidden sadness. She knew Henry had nobody to care for him. Everybody knew. It was any mother's worst nightmare to think that somebody could neglect their own child like that. 'Lock up before you go to bed and don't do anything too stupid.' She said jokingly, and stalked back into the kitchen.

'So, are you okay?' Henry gently twisted Patrick's arm to see an 'F' and an 'A' carved lightly into his pallid skin. *Pussy. Couldn't even do it hard enough to leave permanent damage.*

Patrick grunted in reply. Disinterested.

'Not talkin' to me, huh, candy ass? Well listen, fucker. I've got a place to show you.' Henry drawled, stopping to poke Patrick lightly in the chest. 'Belch, Vic n' I sometimes go there when we're hungry. They got nice shakes.'

'So like a date?' Patrick giggled, poking Henry back.

'Huh?! No way, man! I don't go on dates with other boys!' Henry exploded.

'But you've never been on a date with a girl.' Patrick teased, swaying giddily on the spot.

'Yeah?' Henry grinned, 'But no need to tell anybody that. Or... I'll kick your balls so high you can wear them as earrings!'

Patrick gazed up at Henry, contemplating. Then, after planting a kiss on Henry's forehead, Patrick smiled genuinely for the first time in a long while. This time, Henry didn't mind the gesture so badly. However he still rubbed at his forehead to get rid of Patrick's 'cooties'.

'Thanks for helping me out earlier. I mean, what would my mom and dad think if they see 'fag' written all over my arm!'

'Um, well it's okay. I just didn't want to see you cry like a girl. It would be painfully embarrassing – for *both* of us!' Henry winced,

feeling heat creep under his collar, his cheeks threatening to flush.

### 3

'Henry... This place is full of girls,' Patrick stared in amusement. Sure enough, it was. This was where the elementary and high school girls went to gossip (presumably about boys and school work) and hang out together.

'Well, duh, shit for brains! Seeing as we both like girls, this is the perfect place for us dudes to hang out!' Patrick could practically hear the sarcasm drip thickly from his voice. This satisfied him immensely.

Henry flung himself down on one of the red bar stools, patting the one next to his, Henry grinned. Patrick cautiously picked his way through the crowd. On a Saturday noon, this place could get pretty busy! Feeling eyes stabbing into his back, Patrick felt rather self-conscious. This really was a first!

'There's too many girls here.' Patrick complained, weakly grabbing Henry's arm and averting his eyes.

'What's the problem? You practically are a girl.' Henry jested. Seeing a look of hurt in Patrick's green eyes, he quickly added, 'I'm just kiddin' don't look so bummed out, man! Jesus!'

'Good mornin'.' Henry and Patrick both turned. A woman dressed in a pink waitress garb, and covered with a white, lacy apron stood above them, notebook and pen poised. 'It's not often we get boys in here!' She laughed, but not unkindly. 'So what would you boys like?'

'Strawberry milkshake... please.' Henry muttered, feeling slightly awkward, as if everyone is staring at them. 'Just one?' The waitress smiled, a glint of amusement in her wrinkled face. She backed into the kitchen chuckling and returned rather promptly with a large milkshake topped with a single red cherry. A group of high school girls were watching Henry and Patrick closely, Henry could tell. Twisting around to glare at them, the girls got back to their conversation on the Civil war.

Taking a sip of the milkshake, Patrick sighed, 'Pennywise is mad at

us, Henry... I know. I could feel him watching me all night long.'

Henry leaned closer to Patrick and whispered softly, 'Yeah, he really is.' Hesitating, he placed a comforting hand on top of Patrick's. 'Next time, we really better kill those fuckers. One of them, at least.'

Seemingly changing his mind about the milkshake, Henry slid it across the counter to Patrick. 'This is yours, man. Don't want anyone thinkin' we're together or something gross like that!' Instead, he pulled a cigarette out his jeans pocket and lit it with his father's lighter. Smoke swirled around Patrick's face as Henry exhaled.

Twirling the contents of the sundae cup with his straw, Patrick began to relax. The thought of killing the Losers both thrilled and disturbed him. *I've never killed a human before. I wonder if it's as exciting or easy as stabbing a beetle with my mom's needles, or locking a dog in my Amana?*

Half an hour had passed, and Henry and Patrick had made small talk, light-hearted jokes and smoked tobacco, trying their best to ignore the girls' annoying chatter. Out of boredom, Henry browsed the menu, wondering if the food at *Sundae's* was any good. Almost spitting out his cigarette, Henry trembled in surprise; something about the menu had changed disturbingly. Written in the 'main course' section was a neat cursive, different from the rest of the printed text.

Henry's reading ability was far behind the rest of his class, being a loud and destructive member of Derry Elementary, however the following entrée didn't fail to make his heart freeze with terror; *Patrick Hockstetter:our fresh boy meat won't fail to please! Served rare or medium rare with a side order of fries, leeches or maggots.* Accompanied by the writing was a small black and white Polaroid of Patrick beaming into his parents' camera on a summers day.

Eyes widening, Henry sighed and closed the menu firmly, placing it far out of Patrick's reach. 'Y'know, Pat, I've heard the food in here ain't that great anyway. Let's just finish our drinks and hit the road.' Patrick noticed Henry's grimace despite how calmly he had spoken.

Patrick slurped the remainder of his drink and hopped off the bar

stool, 'Okay, let's go.'

Swinging an arm around Henry's waist, Patrick led them to the door. As the little bell tingled, signalling their departure, the waitress caught Henry's eye. Instead of the kind old face from before, a clown's ridiculous head took its place. Made up with red and blue paints, white greasepaint and black stencilled eyebrows, Pennywise's livid yellow eyes bore into Henry's.

'Would you care for some food, bucko?! It's on me!'

Repressing a scream and gritting his teeth, Henry seized Patrick's hand and raced out into the street and onto the road, narrowly avoiding getting hit by a passing car.

'Hey! Watch it, kid!' the car's owner yells angrily, shaking his fist and spitting on the pavement.

Giving *Sundae's* one last terrified glance, Henry noticed a sign pasted across the newly boarded-up front door; 'Closed for renovation'.

## 7. Chapter 7

1

Both boys didn't stop running until they hit Patrick's house about two miles away. The humidity was killing them and Patrick would have laughed if he weren't so terrified and out of breath - Henry looked although he wouldn't stop running until he reached Mexico! He clutched Patrick's sweaty palm with his own and dug slitted moons into his skin with his long, dirty nails. Tearing down the road, the slight breeze in his face, Henry Bowers felt half-spooked, half-exhilarated and wild with the adrenaline pumping through his veins. Patrick stumbled clumsily behind him, a stitch digging into both his sides and a burning sensation in his throat and lungs. Twice the younger boy tripped over and the eldest simply hauled him up to continue running. Giving a laugh-sob every few seconds, anyone would have thought Henry Bowers had gone even more insane - if that were even possible. He backhanded the sweat running off his face every now and again, his skin going slick with how hot the weather was lately.

Whilst Patrick fumbled with the front door, Henry danced agitatedly on the spot. Seemingly the door just couldn't open fast enough for him. When the boy finally managed to unlatch the door, his peer burst through into the hallway, almost knocking over Patrick's mother on his way in. Josephine gave him a questioning glance but decided it was best to keep her mouth shut. Patrick yelled over his shoulder that he couldn't talk right now and whipped past his mom and up the stairs before she could even say hello. Instead of being angry she simply laughed. After all, boys will be boys, always so full of energy and raring to go.

Henry padded up the stairs, throwing his loafers off when he reached Patrick's room and opening the door without invitation. He'd never seen Patrick's room before and certainly wasn't expecting this. Had Patrick's parents ever even been in here?! Henry doubted it very much... It was too...well *weird*, to say the least. Like any other teenage boy's bedroom, Patrick's sure was messy, just like Henry's own. Patrick's room was rather small, but also considered cosy by

Henry's standards. The wallpaper was old-looking and consisted of thin red, navy blue and off-white stripes. His bed was single and freshly made with his nightwear neatly folded on top and a sad-looking teddy bear laying stranded across his pillows. The window offered a view of Patrick's back yard; a double swing-set was sat there rotting in the middle of the lawn, presumably constructed when Avery was still breathing. Overgrown wildflowers twisted and twined around the long forgotten play area, and the grass could have came up to the boy's middle if he ever went out there (Patrick's parents avoided going out there at all costs. It was too depressing). Henry's eyes widened as he caught glance of what was tacked to Patrick's walls. Multiple pieces of paper were cello-taped wily-nilly to the striped wallpaper. On closer inspection, they seemed to be a part of Patrick's collection of doodles that Henry had found once at the dump. Tracing his finger over the details, Henry noticed there were a lot of hand-drawn pictures of himself. In some of them he had his switch-blade, and in others, much to Henry's embarrassment, he would be surrounded by hearts. He could tell it was him by his trademark greaser hairstyle, but also because they almost always had the initials 'HB' printed around them in Patrick's trembling, left-handed script. Despite being slightly creeped out, Henry felt himself feeling rather flattered to have so many picture of himself on Patrick's wall. Nearby was a picture of Victor and Belch too! Henry joyfully pointed them out to Patrick who smiled and nodded, telling him how hard it was to get Belch's curls just right. There were also a lot of doodles of animals; dogs and cats in particular. One picture caught Henry's interest - a teenage girl with dark hair and blue eyes was clasping the lead of a Great Dane, obviously struggling to keep a hold of him - he briefly wondered if that was Patrick's next door neighbour. He had seen her around before but he didn't think she went to their school. Feeling slightly miffed that there were as many pictures of her as there were of him, Henry turned his attention to other things.

Sifting through Patrick's collection of records, Henry finally found the one he had been looking for. 'Hound dog' by Elvis Presley. Henry grinned as he saw Patrick's record player, obviously brand new and hardly used by the looks of it. Without even asking, the greaser slid the disk out the protective sleeve and slotted it into place in the music player, slipping the needle onto the vinyl and cranking the

handle. He drummed his hands against the cabinet in time to the music, telling his friend how much better things were with music playing in the background.

Eyes bulging almost comically as he caught sight of something rather sinister, Henry burst out laughing, obviously Pennywise was long forgotten. Patrick had quite an assortment of dead beetles and other interesting artifacts. Each were encased in a glass box to preserve their tiny bodies from decay. They ranged in size from about the size of a pea, to the size of a tennis ball. Henry guessed Patrick would be interested in taxidermy when he grew older, being an eccentric science collector or a dead-thing enthusiast. He'd already seen Patrick's disgusting pencil-case collection of mutilated flies at school, but it still came as a shock to see him displaying them so openly like this. What did his mother think of this? She didn't seem like the kind that would allow her son to collect dead things... Henry cast his eyes over each of them, marvelling at how well-preserved they were. His favourite one was an emerald green colour. It's hard outer shell changed colour from that beautiful vivid green to metallic hues of red, orange, silver and salmon depending on how he held it to the light. Patrick knowingly told him it were an Emerald Jewel Beetle with a nod of his head, his eyes shining with his passion for his oddball collection.

However, one side of the room was a chest of drawers. On top was something science-y that caught his eye especially. It looked like some samples of hair. Henry didn't want to snoop too much... He didn't want Patrick to think he was weird for checking out his underwear drawer, so instead he pretended to wipe dust off the dark wood with his forefinger. Particles of the dust flew into the air at Henry's sudden stride, floating around in the golden sunset from Patrick's bedroom window. Moving closer towards the drawer, he saw that Patrick had a collection of different samples of hair. For one disturbing second, Henry almost thought it were his own hair and gave a little scream of repulse. Upon closer inspection, it seemed that the hair wasn't actually hair at all - it was fur. Animal fur... Henry felt sick. A lump formed in his throat. One clump of fur was white and wiry; Henry presumed from some small, yappy dog. Written alongside it was the name 'Mr. Chops'. Next to that lot of fur was another clump, black and fluffy, labelled 'Princess'. In total there

were about two dozen sets of fur, each arranged in neat rows of six. Resisting the urge to puke, Henry knew exactly where the fur came from and why Patrick would collect such a strange thing. The beetles, yes. Henry could almost understand them. They were pretty and made Patrick look kind of like some intelligent professor. The animal fur... No, that was just too much.

'You *sick fuck*,' Henry chuckled darkly, running a hand through his own hair for comfort. He then realised that he was almost trapped in Patrick's bedroom with nobody but Patrick's wacky parents to rescue him if things started getting weird or scary.

'I love you too, Henry,' Patrick simpered jokingly, suddenly feeling distantly uncomfortable having Henry inspect his bedroom like this. That was much too private.

'Yeah, I can tell you do,' Henry taunted, jabbing a finger at the many pictures of himself on the wall, 'Stalker...' he added with a hint of a smirk.

'Don't act like you don't love it,' Patrick tittered, swaying on the spot, 'Besides... I make you look so much hotter than you already are!'

'Well, thanks. Wait! Hey, you little punk!'

Patrick giggled as Henry wrestled him onto the bed, pinning him down next to his teddy bear and kneeling on his chest. Patrick felt almost winded as Henry was being so rough with him. Instead of beating him like Patrick was anticipating, Henry wrapped his hands around his neck. For one frightening second, Patrick thought he was going to be strangled to death and closed his eyes, knowing there was no way he could stop it - however, instead of the burning pain of strangulation he felt the giddy, prickly, hellishly torturous pain of being tickled. Being extremely ticklish, Patrick couldn't help but scream and yell his head off, swearing and begging Henry that he'd do anything to make him stop. His teddy bear somehow got trapped underneath his body and Patrick could feel its beady eyes digging into the nape of his neck. Still, Henry's hands moved not so gently across Patrick's body; scratching, jabbing and grabbing at his neck, underarms, stomach and feet. Tears pooled in Patrick's green eyes and his face turned a postbox red as he continued screaming for

mercy and giggling. Downstairs, Henry could hear movement from Josephine - obviously she was wondering why her only son was screaming like that. Hopefully she wouldn't come up there and ruin all their fun.

'H-h..hahaha- Henry! S-stop! Puh- hahaha... Puh-lease! I think I'm gonna be sic-'

'Hey, what's this?' Henry asked, now laying directly on top of Patrick, squashing both him and the poor teddy bear. From in between the slither of space between the mattress and the bed frame, Henry could see the corner of something poking out. It was quite fat for a wad of paper and it was folded up to take less space. Henry guessed it was a comic book and slid it out before Patrick could say no. Henry looked at the front cover and dropped the magazine all of a sudden, spluttering with pained laughter. This wasn't a comic book! It was something far more for adult tastes, and Henry wondered how hard Patrick had to search to find this kind of magazine. No newsagent in Derry sold homo-erotic materials - especially to minors! 'Wow... Patrick!'

'Give it back, Henry!' Patrick yelled, still trapped underneath him for the umpteenth time this summer, 'You... You can't read this - it's private!' His older friend saw an almost desperate look in his eyes... but that didn't mean he was going to let off so easily! Patrick's face had turned back to beetroot-red and Henry was immensely satisfied with how uncomfortable he was making him feel. Shifting his weight so that Patrick became completely and utterly trapped, Henry pinned his forearms on top of Patrick's although to disable him from grabbing the magazine back.

'I would... but *actually*...' Henry paused, choosing his manipulative words carefully, 'I want to read this now. Can I read it, Patrick? I know you'd like me to *really*.'

Patrick chose to say nothing. Instead, he watched impassively as Henry scanned the cover with his eyes. In this months issue, a young man (Patrick guessed he was in his early twenties) stood topless, flexing all his muscles to the camera. The photographer had managed to capture all the handsome, smooth crevices of his biceps and abs with the black and white print. Patrick knew this cover photo was his

favourite by far. His plump lips were slightly parted and in perfect imitation of the magazine's heart-throb, Elvis Presley. The man's hair was dark and slicked back in a DA just like Henry's, only neater and more styled.

Henry glanced at Patrick just to see his reaction. The greaser wasn't really embarrassed to look at this kind of imagery - after all, he saw topless men all the time, both at school when they were getting changed for PE and at home when his dad had people helping him on the farm during summer. Patrick however was a different case. An almost hyperactive smile formed on his lips and Henry knew that could either mean he was feeling ashamed, or he was about to do something they'd both regret. Smirking and turning to the next page, Henry wasn't expecting the magazine to be so filled with greasers. The next page displayed another young man laying on the hood of a car, half naked wearing only his thin, white and flimsy underpants. Henry choked up laughing, especially seeing as the guy had hair exactly like Victor's!

'That's enough, Henry!' Patrick warned, suddenly taking on the tone of a school teacher.

Henry glared down at him, seemingly forgetting what kind of magazine he was reading; 'No. Fuck off, Patrick. I'm reading this whether you like it or not!'

Patrick watched as Henry studied the next picture. His brow furrowed. Patrick hoped he hadn't seen the one he thought he was looking at... That one would be way too humiliating. Nope. Seemingly it was a different one that was less revealing. Lowering the magazine down slightly to his eye level, Patrick saw the one he had glared at was actually the picture of the two greaser boys kissing open-mouthed. Patrick's lips twisted into a smug smirk remembering the few amount of times he'd just managed to steal a kiss from Henry.

Carefully flicking the glossy pages, the next picture almost made Henry drop the magazine on Patrick's face. 'Alright,' Henry huffed, feeling all the colour rise to his cheeks, 'I've had enough now... That was fucking disturbing... I'll have nightmares for months now all thanks to you!'

'You liked it,' Patrick said forcefully, his face suddenly going emotionless. Henry scoffed in reply. 'Oh, yeah, Hockstetter. How can you tell?'

'Well... For one...' Patrick pointed in between Henry's legs. Henry went a dull red, suddenly wishing he'd never taunted Patrick like that. Patrick always knew how to get his revenge... 'And secondly, you wouldn't stop reading it even when I told you not to,' he finished smugly, his expression finally deciding on complacency.

It was at that moment that Josephine Hockstetter decided to bring her son and his friend some snacks. She figured they'd be ravenous after playing baseball out in the park all day. What she didn't know was that they actually went down to *Sundae's* for the shock of their life, and that was the reason they came in sweating so much. Not because they were playing baseball... She should have known really - Patrick didn't have an athletic bone in his body. 'Hey, boys,' she cooed, entering her son's room without knocking. Their family had a no secrets policy, you see. That was installed not long after Avery died *just in case*. She paused with her manicured hand still on the door handle, obviously surprised at what she was seeing. Being a rather ditsy woman, Josephine rubbed her eyes and gave a little unbelieving giggle. 'Um, what are you guys doing?' she asked, her tone not quite as sweet as usual.

Henry had to admit what she was seeing must have looked rather suspicious. After all, he was still lying flush on top of Patrick, his arms folded and his chin resting on Patrick's chest. Patrick himself had his legs spread apart where Henry's abdomen lay against his own, and clenched in her son's trembling hands was a homo-erotic magazine that she had no idea where on earth he could have found it.

'Is that what all the screaming was about...?' she enquired, her expression slightly mystified, slightly fazed. Josephine's lipsticked mouth looked like she had sucked a lemon.

Both Henry and Patrick found they couldn't quite explain what was going on. What both boys knew, however, was that they would be in deep, deep trouble when she noticed what they'd been reading. Instead of being honest, Bowers swiftly rolled off Patrick, collecting

the magazine and sitting on it in one smooth movement. He was wearing that same fake smile that Josephine would see so often at the clinic.

Mrs Hockstetter placed her hands on hips; 'What was that magazine boys?' with an almost innocent tone she then chirruped, 'Can I see?'

Patrick felt his world turning back to grey again - he sighed, shrugging his shoulders in a 'suit yourself' gesture despite the firm poker face he was displaying. Besides him, Henry visibly tensed up, his bony elbows digging right into Patrick's sides, reminding him rightfully how much strife he'd be in later with his father if Patrick's mom ratted him out. Narrowing his eyes, Henry slid the magazine from under his legs and handed it to the woman, obviously not very happy with his current situation.

'Thank you, Henry.'

Henry said nothing and kept his eyes lowered. In all honesty he felt too embarrassed to look her in the eye after what just happened. Reminding himself that it could be a whole lot worse, Henry then risked a glance at Mrs Hockstetter's face. He'd seen her earlier this morning when he'd dropped by Patrick's house to take him out for dinner; instead of her typical motherly beam he'd been rewarded with then, she was now wearing a worried frown, her eyes flickering disconcertingly over each page as she wondered why her son would have hold of this magazine. When she'd stopped after what felt like an eternity to the boys, finally getting the the final and most sensual picture, Mrs Hockstetter closed the bimonthly with a shuddering gasp. Henry and Patrick exchanged a quick glance.

'Why do you have this, Patrick?' she then asked, her tone melodramatic and shaky with a mother's natural impulse to worry. Patrick could see she was close to tears and mentally begged her not to cry in front of Henry.

Before Patrick could respond, Henry had already cut across, 'That's not his, ma'am. It's um, actually mine.' Despite being an absolute menace at school, Henry found he could have really good manners at the best of times. That was all part and parcel of having a true psychopathic personality confused with his day-to-day personality.

'So don't have a bird at Patrick, this is all my fault...'

Josephine blinked.

Henry couldn't stand being there any longer. He wanted to simply run away but something was holding him back. Was it the terror he had faced in *Sundae's*? Was it the urge to suddenly scream that the magazine was all Patrick's, and that it had absolutely nothing to do with him?

'Well... Thank you for being honest, sweetheart...'

'Fine,' was all that Henry said in reply - and with that he left. Patrick warily watched him cross the road from his bedroom window, secretly admiring him for standing up for him like that and taking all the blame. Josephine didn't mention the magazine again after Henry had left and instead asked Patrick what he'd like for tea. Feeling miserable, Patrick numbly mumbled that he'd like fried chicken with some fries and locked himself in his room until his father came home from work.

## 8. Chapter 8

1

*Henry's gone soft... He's a faggot. Henry's gone soft... What a pussy!*

'Shut up!'

*Henry's a fag. Henry's a faggot. Lookit him fall in love with that pansy boy! He's gone soft... Softer than Eddie Kaspbrak, even softer than Patrick Hockstetter... Henry's gone faggot!*

'Shut. Up.' Henry shot up in bed, his hair tousled and sticking up at odd points from sleep, or lack of rather. Ever since he'd left Patrick's house earlier he'd thrown himself in bed and refused to move, burying that damned magazine far underneath his mattress along with all his other secrets. Under that bed was like a goldmine. You could always tell a lot about a person by the contents of under their bed. That is where people most commonly hide things they wouldn't want just anybody to come across; empty candy wrappers, decapitated doll heads, dirty magazines, old pairs of underwear, dust bunnies - you name it, it's down there. Under Henry's bed was his trusty switch-blade that Pennywise had gifted him with. He treasured it more than anybody would have thought. Every so often, when Henry was feeling down, frustrated or worried, he'd go delving into the space under his mattress just so he could take the blade out of its protective casing and stare at it. Somehow it made him feel relaxed knowing he always had something to fall back on and that he wasn't completely powerless in this world. That switchblade was like a symbol of sanity to Henry - clear evidence that Pennywise wasn't entirely just in his head like some people would say. If Pennywise wasn't real, then how did he receive this gift? If Pennywise wasn't real, then how on earth did Henry meet up with the dead Eddie Corcoran and Veronica Grogan to get this stupid, smelly cardboard box?

'Exactly,' Henry said smugly to himself in the half-darkness of his bedroom. The windows were open (like always, even on really cold days) and offered a steady, relaxing breeze to accompany the cool darkness he was laying in. Henry often got migraines and blamed

Patrick Hockstetter for each and every one of them. Today he did just the same. 'Stupid Patrick and his stupid homo magazines! Now my dad's gonna think I've gone faggot if he ever finds this! It's not even like I can throw this in the trash without daddy or Rena finding it someway or another. Fuck.'

To give himself some reassurance, Henry crawled out of bed and groped under the mattress to find his switch-knife and flick it open and closed. The silver glinted prettily in the darkness and Henry gave a little sad smile, knowing what he must do with it. After all, Pennywise didn't give it to him to become a top-class chef did he now? Henry thought of the Losers. As it was eleven o 'clock in the evening, they'd probably be tucked up in bed sleeping or reading. Stuttering Bill would be reading some horror book he'd sneaked out of his father's office no doubt. Ben Hanscome, Henry knew almost certainly as a fact, would be reading those books he'd borrowed from the town's library on the first days of the holidays, still with Henry's engineer boot printed onto the first page where he'd tried to stomp it into the mud. Beverly Marsh... Henry had no idea what she was into. She was a girl, so he guessed he didn't really care what made her buzz in particular. Stanley Uris, Henry knew would be dreaming about birds at this time of night - Most likely stuck in some sweet dream full of birds of paradise on a tropical island somewhere in the Caribbean. Richie Tozier would be driving his parents mad by practising his ventriloquism deep into the early hours of the morning. What about Mike Hanlon? He'd be fast asleep by now, not so far from Henry's home - he was such a little baby in Henry's opinion. 11 and his parents still treated him like he was 6 years old. He didn't even know what sex was! Eddie Kaspbrak would also be deep asleep at this time. His mother wouldn't have it any other way.

'What a bunch of Losers!' Henry announced to the empty room, suddenly afraid of how silent the place was. He couldn't even hear Rena drunkenly yelling at his father, and boy was that a first!

*Henry's gay. Henry's gonna be hung. Henry's gonna get beaten to death by his father. Henry's gonna be taken away. Henry doesn't deserve to be in everyday society. Henry Bowers and Patrick Hockstetter are gonna get found out. They're gonna be KILLED!*

That last word rang in Henry's ears maddeningly. It echoed

throughout the room like how somebody's voice would sound if they were trapped in a hole or some kind of underground sewer system. Henry attempted to pay it no mind - instead playing with his switchblade in a daze. His father walked in, casually under-dressed in just his yellowing underpants. As his son's eyes seemed so wide and frightened, Oscar Bowers probably would have asked him what was wrong if he were in his right mind. Instead of giving him comfort, he gave him a sharp slap around the face and a leer.

'Get to bed. It's late.'

'Yes, daddy. I'm sorry daddy.'

Quickly, Henry shoved his blade under the mattress before his dad could see it and think he was going to murder him. In his haste, Henry's fingers got cut slightly, but that didn't matter at all. What did matter was that his dad didn't go berserk at the sight of a weapon in his hands. That could happen - and unfortunately Henry knew what the aftermath of that situation would be. Death, obviously.

Shaking his fingers, small droplets of blood sprayed against the bedsheets and thankfully Oscar Bowers didn't notice. Henry winced, not liking the sight of his own blood. It reminded him too often of his nightmares where he'd wake up covered in his own blood, but of course sometimes he really did wake up covered in blood. Swear to God.

Soon enough, Oscar came blundering into bed besides Henry. He always alerted his presence with the heavy sound of someone overweight simply jumping into bed without any grace. He smelt completely smashed and Henry knew he'd been drinking heavily again. Whenever he snored, the smell of intoxication drafted onto his face causing Henry's nose to wrinkle in disgust.

'You're disgusting, dad. I hate you,' Henry whispered, feeling his father's back press against his own in the king-size bed they shared. Being a really hot day, Henry certainly wished he could have his own bed instead of having to share one with his father. 'I hope you keel over and die so I don't have to look at you any longer.'

Oscar gave a grunt in his sleep.

'You smell really bad and you always beat me. Go fuck yourself.'

Henry could hear Rena snoring from her make-shift bed in the kitchen.

'You're just as bad, Rena. Useless bitch.'

For the next two hours Henry tried to sleep but it was just no use. His father's body-heat compiled with the muggy weather outside was making him too hot to drift off properly. Sighing, Henry stumbled out of bed, the hair on his head sticking to his forehead and the creases from the bedclothes imprinted on his skin. He looked around dumbly for a while, still frightened of the dark and trying to find his whereabouts in this pitch black room. The curtain billowed open in an abrupt, freakish summer evening breeze. Henry found his way over to the window, picking his way over the mess on his bedroom floor, standing on at least three painful things in his sleepy state.

Out the window the sky was a lovely deep blue colour. As their home was about as far out in the country you could expect to get in this particular area of Maine, there were no streetlights but the ones protecting the homes from passing joyriders. The evening stars were just beautiful and Henry knew nothing could ever beat stargazing alone on a summers evening. There was nothing else halfway fun to do in his home. Either watch the stars or watch your parents get themselves absolutely drunken. There was Orion, and there was Draco. Those two were his favourites by far. Both Orion and Draco were powerful constellations and Henry knew if Orion and Draco were actually living people, they'd be the coolest cats around. Orion was a hunter. He took no shit from nobody. Draco was a large and intimidating snake. Could you get any cooler than that? Henry didn't think so.

Casting his eyes just a little further down the road, Henry could see Mike Hanlon's house illuminated in the night by both the fireflies and the lanterns spread about the front porch. The Hanlon's house was much handsomer than the Bowers' house and almost anybody in Derry could tell you that. Oscar Bowers often blamed the Hanlon's for his misfortune on the farm - but Henry knew deep down that he only blamed them because they were black. When he was just a little kid, Oscar Bowers sat him down on his knee and told him everything that

was wrong with the world. Apparently homosexuals, blacks, Jews, gypsies, women, the physically and mentally disabled and the Japanese were everything that was wrong with the world. Over breakfast Oscar Bowers would rant about the Japanese. During lunch he would create some sob-story over how black people had ruined his farm, the crumbs from his sandwich getting trapped in his moustache. Whilst drinking straight from the bottle of wine he would sob over how homosexuals were poisoning young peoples minds. Henry didn't know what to believe. Deep down he knew it was ridiculous. Even deeper down he knew everyone was the same. We were all human. We all have skeletons to support, nourish and keep us strong. We all have lungs that inhale and exhale carbon dioxide. We all have hearts that pump blood around our bodies. Heck, we all have skin covering our body and does it really matter what colour that skin is!?

The greaser wondered what would happen if his father were to find out about the magazine under his bed. He knew nothing good would come of it surely. It was dangerous, even in the year of 1958 to wear your sexuality on your sleeve. Henry knew what happened to homosexuals during world War II. They were taken to the concentration camps along with the Jews, gypsies, blacks, mentally ill, physically disabled, etc. Many of those poor souls were rescued not even 10 years ago, but Henry still couldn't shake this feeling that if anybody were to find out about Patrick and himself in the hateful town of Derry, then something awful along those lines would happen. Hell! His father would probably be the ringleader! It all played out in Henry's head: He'd be sent away in shackles alongside Patrick Hockstetter. Together, they'd be marched in some awful, jeering, humiliating parade surrounded by clowns and drag queens. Oscar Bowers of course, wearing a silver clown suit with pink pompoms as buttons, would be the mastermind behind this awful freak-show - leading his only son and his young lover to their prison. A large crowd would gather (presumably the whole of Derry, or at least the whole of Derry Elementary) just to see Henry cry. There would be the Losers club, laughing and pointing in the crowd as the two boys were led away to Juniper Hills in blue and white striped pyjamas. Confetti would come raining down as they get through the gates, signalling that they would no longer be poisoning the social system with their 'disgusting' acts of male-male love.

Suddenly, Henry felt his face go hot as tears came trickling down his cheeks and dripped off his chin. All of that just by looking over at Mike Hanlon's house?! Henry really *was* going soft. He didn't need the voices from the moon to tell him that.

## 9. Chapter 9

1

Patrick Hockstetter was curled up on Henry's front porch, a single hand trailed into the dirt, chasing the poor ants who just wanted to get to his candies. It was the first time Henry had allowed him to visit his home. To be perfectly honest he was ashamed — ashamed of how poor he is in comparison to Patrick, embarrassed of his insane father, and painfully aware of how dirty and small his rundown farm actually is. Luckily his father was out downtown doing Lord knows what. It had taken a whole lot of nagging, begging and blackmailing for Patrick to finally walk the organised-chaos of the Bowers farmhouse. Instead of being angry Henry was simply on edge. Watching Patrick absentmindedly crush the ants, Henry's brow was furrowed; he smoked a cigarette to calm his nerves, which he seemed to be getting a lot of lately.

A crudely-sewn red and white gingham picnic blanket was spread across the porch, courtesy of Rena, Oscar Bowers's fat, filthy and 40-year old girlfriend. The boys were listening to Elvis Presley followed by Buddy Holly followed by Cliff Richards, otherwise known to Patrick as 'that British guy'. The tiny radio sat precariously balanced on the window ledge upon which, Rena was sat watching the world go by whilst listening to the boys talking about pointless boy things.

Finally Patrick unclenched his mouth full of salt water taffy with an unbecoming smack, 'Henry, I really do think we should go about our mission today.' He may be thick, but he certainly was careful not to disclose any information with Rena hanging around so closely.

Before Henry could reply, Rena had stuck her big nose in things. 'What 'mission' is that, boys?'

'Oh... We're um, playing a red Indian-cowboy game with our summer school friends,' Patrick murmured, not quite making eye-contact, 'We're the cowboys.' He added for extra assurance.

'Yeah~ Our mission is to shoot down all the Indians before they get us. With a toy gun of course.' Henry grinned, flashing his teeth at

Rena. *Nosey bitch — just mind ya own business!*

'Interesting.' Rena said, not an ounce of interest in her tone. She added a nonchalant nod of her head, as if to make herself seem more involved. Greasy strings of mousy hair fell into her eyes. Truth be told she just wanted to listen to Elvis on the radio. He was her celebrity crush.

'Well, just don't hurt anybody, Henry. Ya know how your dad hates that.' After staring for a while into the hazy crazy lazy daze of summer, Rena jumped down off the ledge with a heavy thump. Patrick bit back the urge to giggle when clouds of dust exploded around them as a sign of Rena's obesity. 'I've got some errands to run. I'll see ya later, kid.'

Patrick waved a cheerful hand in Rena's direction whereas Henry could hardly raise a smile, much less say goodbye.

'Thank God she left!' Henry let out a moan, collapsing backwards to the blanket with his eyes closed against the sun.

'She ain't that bad, y'know.' Patrick said out of politeness, 'She makes a mean cherry pie. My mom sure could learn somethin' from her.'

'Yeah. Right.'

'Mmm-hmm. Mom's no good at baking, she just burns everything – we're actually thinking of getting a maid. Now are you just gonna lie around or are we gonna go get those Losers!'

Henry whipped up at this, 'Oh shit, Patrick. I can't come today!' He shielded his eyes from the sun and gave Patrick a winsome smile to combat his burning look of disappointment. 'Look, Pat... I said I have to pick corn with my dad. He'd kick my ass otherwise!'

'Fine,' Patrick averted his eyes, 'I guess I'll do it alone.' With one last glance at Henry, Patrick smirked with a malicious glint in his eyes. He knew what he was about to say would keep Henry up until the early hours of the morning; 'Don't go blaming me when Pennywise comes and eats you. And believe me, he will.'

Henry's eyes widened at this. His heart started to beat just a little

faster finding he couldn't spit out a reply. Patrick was already leaving.

## 2

Trudging down the road with a sullen smile, Patrick found himself distantly mad at Henry for not being there when he needed him most. It was as if his emotions were surrounded by a thick fog – he couldn't feel anything all that extreme, as if he were trapped in some kind of dream (or nightmare. You choose.) where feelings were numbed by slumber. His movements were slow. Slower than usual anyhow – and everything felt misty and far away. The winding dust road away from Henry's barn seemed to stretch on and on, and Patrick began to sweat, fearing he'd never reach his objective. Everything seemed to last an eternity and Patrick knew exactly who was to blame. Pennywise the dancing clown. *Fucking-A clown on the moon! He does it to scare us into doing what he wants. I can just tell.*

Every night he'd have the same dream over and over. Usually Patrick would tell his mother anything but this time he was too frightened to talk. When he'd mentioned it to Henry, his friend had simply thrown back his head and laughed superciliously. '*That's nothing compared to the things I have to deal with, Pat!*'

*Fine, Patrick thought, If I want things to get back to normal I'll just have to do as he says. I'll kill the Losers... even if Henry isn't here right now.*

It seemed vaguely to Patrick that in the end, his story will have a happy ending. The Losers would be dead; Pennywise would leave him alone and maybe, just maybe, Henry too. However something was stopping him. He wasn't quite sure what. Perhaps the thought of killing a *human* disturbed him somewhat. He had never felt this kind of aversion towards killing before, especially with his test animals. Or maybe, it was because he didn't feel as strong without Henry by his side? Whatever it was, Patrick was determined to overcome the anxiety. Somehow, he felt angry at himself for being so useless without Henry. Henry was bold and coldly self-sufficient. Henry was big and strong. Henry was great. Henry was so blah blah blah. *Why can't I be Henry? Nobody's ever scared of fat, five-foot-five Patrick.*

In the late afternoon, looking up from where his thoughts had

stopped him in his tracks, Patrick had turned around to see Henry staring at him from a few feet away, still relaxing on the picnic blanket.

'Patrick? Look, I'm sorry. Dad'll have my hide if I don't help him. Why did you just stop like that? I thought you were going to get the Losers?'

Eventually Patrick found that he had got nowhere at all. He was still stood where he had about five minutes ago, and Henry was looking worried. He had been too lost in thought. Sweat dripped down his face and both boys knew it wasn't entirely the humidity's fault. 'Shut up Henry! I was-'

Patrick stopped mid-sentence, mouth agape. Oscar Bowers was pulling up, his green ford's tires crackling against the gravel, kewpie doll swinging from the rear-view mirror like the worlds' youngest lynch victim. 'I'll see you around, Henry.' Patrick muttered darkly.

### 3

*Stanley Uris. Stan. The Jew. He is weak. Almost as weak as Kasbrak. I could take him down. I could kill him. Henry ain't here but I could still beat the shit out of him.*

Patrick was sat down on the park bench near his home. His hands were clenched and he was muttering the evil thoughts under his breath. You could just hear the dusty cogs turning and churning inside his poisonous mind, cobwebs, spider carcasses and all. It took all his concentration to form this plan to kill Stan, and his head was beginning to ache. His complexion turned a dull red with a sudden feverish feeling. Instead of tracking down Stan where he mostly hangs out (either at the main park near the big houses, bird watching, or down in the barrens with those Losers) Patrick decided to simply go home and drink iced tea with his mother.

He had begun to notice lately that Josephine Hockstetter didn't seem that well. She was obviously thinner and paler, her face gaunt and her wrists just beginning to get spindly. Patrick was mildly worried. He had asked her just the other day if she was coming down with something (summer flus can be the worst, huh) but she had shook her

head with a sad smile, and Patrick had been relieved, skipping off kittenishly to go about his fridge-business. Yet, he felt he had been lied to. He knew for a fact his mother went to Dr Stein's clinic every second Wednesday of the month.

'Mommy, I'm home.' Patrick called to the empty hall, closing the door gently behind him and locking it for good measure. He found that his mother flinched at loud noises such as a door slamming, and that it's best to do everything as quietly as possible. Patrick cocked his head but still couldn't hear any sounds of life. He jogged into the open-plan kitchen/dining room/parlour, afraid his mother might have collapsed somewhere whilst he was out. His father, Ronald, wouldn't be getting home from work until six, and it worried him that there was nobody to watch his sickly mother whilst they were both out.

In the kitchen, both his mother and father were sat in stony silence. By their body language and the lack of conversation, Patrick could tell something was up. 'Hey, daddy. Hello, mommy. Why are you home so early, dad?'

'Sit down, son. We need to talk.' Ronald said, his face devoid of any expression. By his tone, Patrick could tell whatever they were going to discuss wouldn't be good. *Not. At. All.*

Patrick sat. Not on the barstools, on the floor. There wasn't enough room for him to sit too and everyone knew it.

'Patrick...' His mother began with a trembling voice, 'Your teacher called. We've had calls from her in the past but...' She sighed, 'We tried to overlook it, your father and I.'

Patrick's green eyes widened.

'Now you know that homo-' Josephine coughed, her face beginning to flush. Patrick could tell it was shame and felt himself blush too. 'Homosexuality is wrong... Don't you, sweetheart?'

'Mrs Reichs, she told us that at first it was just girls, but now you're harassing boys. Patrick, why is this?' Ronald whispered, not quite meeting Patrick's sullen gaze.

'We don't want you to feel ashamed, Patty. Really we don't! It's just... You're sick. Aren't you? You can tell us anything you know, my boy. Anything at all! And we'll always love you.' Josephine garbled, her eyes alarmed and insincere.

'There's this special type of tea on the market. It can help you, I promise.' Patrick's dad tossed down a cardboard box containing 50 'sexual-correction' tea bags. The wrapping was a hot pink with anti-gay slogans that Hitler himself could have wrote. *Great, just great.*

'This will be our little secret. Don't you worry! I won't tell all your friend's moms!' Josephine chirped cheerfully. *Yeah, I bet you won't. You're too ashamed about having a homosexual son.*

'Well,' Patrick's dad said, stretching out and raising from his seat, 'I'm glad we've got that sorted! I'm off to the office again. Call me if you need anything, dear.' He quickly pecked his wife on the lips and Patrick watched him speed off in his work-car through the kitchen window. He stared out the window for a while, not quite sure why or how this was happening all so fast.

'Patrick...' Josephine lingered in the doorway, making Patrick jump as he was 110% sure she had left, 'This was all daddy's idea... The tea I mean. Silly, isn't it?' She offered a tight smile and started the washing up.

The fine china saucer slipped between her frail fingers and shattered at her feet, causing her to whimper in fear and shield her eyes with her fists.

'Mom!'

Between her fingers, Patrick could see a lone tear slip down her hand and drop to the china-shards on the ground. 'Mommy? Are you okay...?'

Sobs wracked her thin, almost skeletal body, and Patrick swayed on the spot, unsure of what to do or how to comfort her. He had never seen his mother break down like this before.

'No, Patrick. I just want to go to bed. I'm tired,' She cried, hiding her

face. For a while it was just Mrs Hockstetter sobbing openly in the kitchen with her son watching her helplessly.

'C-come here, mommy. I'm going to help you up the stairs and you're gonna get your nightgown on, and I'll tuck you up in bed.' Patrick heard himself say, his voice hardly above a whisper. 'Then, you can try and have a little sleep, okay?'

'You're a good boy. I don't care what Ronald says.' Mrs Hockstetter whined, backhanding the mascara tracks from off her cheeks.

Patrick stared at this. He was halfway up the stairs with his arm wrapped around his mother's waist. One gentle push and she'd be gone.

'Not that he doesn't love you!' His mother added quickly, 'He loves you desperately, Patty – he... He just thinks homosexuality is a disease.' She giggled weakly, then muttered, 'It's a whole load of bullshit, Patrick. Oops! Sorry for swearing! Don't tell your father!'

'Yes, mother.' Patrick agreed this situation reeked of bullshit. *I should be allowed to fuckin' love anyone I want! Why does it matter Henry and I are both boys? If homosexuality is a disease, then I should be getting time off school for it!*

After helping his mother into bed, ensuring she was fast asleep and comfortable, Patrick planted a kiss on her forehead. 'I hope you feel better soon, mom,' he whispered and shut her door to as silently as he could possibly manage. Seeing her so vulnerable and timid had made him feel downhearted. Usually she was so petite and lively. It made him feel almost sick himself.

#### 4

It was late afternoon and Patrick Hockstetter decided to take a stroll in the park by the big houses. With a quick glance at his wrist-watch, Patrick could see he had little time left if he really wanted to catch Stan Uris. Usually he hung around from noon 'till three pm, just watching those stupid North American birds.

He had been wondering around aimlessly for the past half hour until

he eventually caught sight of the boy, sat primly on the edge of the water-fountain, binoculars poised, lost in his own little aviary-world. Luckily he was all alone - not a damned Loser in sight! Patrick felt he could certainly take on a Loser if they didn't have their friends by their side.

Deciding on a calm, friendly approach Patrick slipped down besides Stan and wrapped his hands firmly over the edge of the fountain; 'Afternoon, Stanley Uris~'

As Hockstetter was a quiet member of 6L, he didn't have much reputation or recognition to Stan, 'Oh, Good afternoon, Patrick.' He offered a handsome smile and went back to his bird-watching much to Patrick's annoyance.

Underneath Patrick's sweater vest was the small bulge of his father's pistol in case of an emergency. He had to admit it must have looked suspicious wearing winter clothes in the middle of July, but the metallic cool of the gun reassured him it was all for a good reason. Maybe even the reason he was born!

'I'm really grateful for the weather we're having right now. It hasn't been this hot since May!' Stan said, obviously feeling a little awkward with the lack of conversation, 'It's good for the birds too. Would you like a look?'

'Uh, yeah. Sure, Stan,' Patrick smiled complacently and took the binoculars from Stan's outstretched hand. He held them gingerly in front of his face, not really interested in watching some turtle dove doing a mating dance or whatever. 'Pretty~' He added, his tone slightly mischievous as he slipped his hand over Stan's.

Stan blinked in surprise, 'Um, Patrick? What are you doing?' To Patrick his tone was level, yet he had an uncomfortable aura about him. Apparently this was very funny to Patrick and he tittered as he stroked his hand, slipping his fingers between Stan's long, slender ones. His nails were very clean and neatly trimmed – almost like a girl's.

'This is inappropriate, Patrick,' Stan said level-headedly, suddenly remembering those many spring days in 6L where Patrick had been

sent to the Guidance Counsellor for touching people, 'Please could you st—'

There was a loud crunch as Stan saw his own wrist break before his very eyes.

The couples walking leisurely in the park heard a howling noise as if little kid had fallen over and scraped his knee, however they thought nothing of it - but they of course couldn't see a 12 year-old boy being wrestled to his knees by his peer.

'Pat! Stop! Please!' Stan croaked, feeling too weak to speak above a whisper. The pain in his wrist was unbearable and he felt himself almost collapsing in Patrick's arms.

'That's what you get when you mess with Henry,' Patrick lulled into Stan's ear, pushing him into a kneeling position on the grass. Patrick crouched behind him with his thumb and forefinger pinching and grinding into his carpels, bringing his broken arm behind his back. Stan distantly felt Patrick's clammy hand brush through his dark hair before his head was underwater. He attempted to cry out but it was all in vain as water filled his lungs.

By a stroke of luck, Stan managed to free his head from under the fountain's water, 'No! HELP! Patrick stop! Sto-' The cries didn't last long as he was soon pushed firmly back under, the speech turning into inaudible bubbling noises.

He felt himself fly into full-blown panic as his limbs started to numb. Even his broken wrist felt disconnected from his struggling body. Thinking of the birds that he loves, his favourite being the robin that he had spotted with his father last Hanukkah, he grew calm once again. After all, his birds had gotten him out of many sticky situations before. Many of which he had barely just survived. Being drowned by crazy Patrick Hockstetter wasn't considered a highly dignified way to die in Stan's honest opinion. Yet, neither was being eaten by the dead boys from the rich houses. Thinking of all the birds he had yet to spot, Stan gained a sudden burst of energy.

Bursting free once again from the water he choked and spluttered, spitting the thankfully clean water out of his mouth. Patrick was

stuck in a daze, breathing heavily and still flush behind him. Stan could feel something weird pressing against his back. With a weak swipe of Stan's hand, Patrick's nose spurted with blood for probably the third time this summer.

Breathing shallowly, Stan's lungs burned as he found himself fainting once again. Desperately glancing to his left for help as the world turned grey, Stan's eyes fell on the shadows of six people before they rolled back into his head.

## 10. Chapter 10

1

To celebrate their almost-victory, Henry and Patrick had used a fake ID to buy alcohol from the local corner shop down Patrick's road. Nobody would believe Patrick was of legal age - he had such a baby face, even for a 12 year old. In fact, many people guessed his age at ten or eleven years old! So Henry of course was the one who had to do all the sweet talking and convincing. It was a good think the nice lady selling him the booze was rather dumb... Otherwise they would have come back empty handed. Henry would have become very irate if that had happened. He was already on edge considering the awful things that had just happened, but he didn't want to mull over that any longer - so on with the drinks! They had bought a six pack of Budweiser considering Patrick's parents were out at the Aladdin for the evening. Presumably they were watching some sappy romance film together and told Patrick that he were to lock up on his own and watch TV until they came back - no friends allowed! Did you really expect Patrick to obey his parents orders? Patrick was indifferent to whatever he didn't want to hear. Especially coming from his father. Quite often it was 'My way or the highway' with Patrick, and his parents came to understand that. They were too weak-willed to discipline him, especially the mother. She didn't believe in beating to teach good behaviour, in fact, she knew it had the complete opposite effect from her experiences as a child.

'I can't believe your mom let you have the house all to yourself while they go out!' Henry yelled, flinging himself down on Patrick's front porch, sitting with his legs far apart and his body relaxing flush against the balcony trimmings, 'How fucking awesome is that!' He attacked the six pack with his nails and sighed when he realised he'd need some scissors to get into it. He gestured for Patrick to bring him some, and Patrick scurried away quickly into his house and returned a few seconds later with them, forgetting how often his mom told him off for running with scissors.

'I know, right! My mom's real cool... Sometimes...' Patrick giggled, shrugging his shoulders proudly, 'My dad seemed to want me to come

with them. But I think he's just scared that I'll stay home alone just so I can fuck boys,' he added with a laugh, not noticing how Henry's expression changed from relaxed to extremely uncomfortable at the last thing he just said. 'He's acting all stupid anyway... Just ignore everything he says, Henry. If he says anything to you, that is.'

Patrick carried on, jabbing at the plastic with his scissors; 'Mom and dad think I'm a homo. They make me drink this stupid tea every morning - it doesn't work, mind you - I just drink it 'cuz it tastes good!'

'Hmm,' was all Henry could say. Really he wasn't surprised that Patrick's parents were acting all funny. However, Henry really, really, *really* didn't want to have this conversation, so he simply grabbed a beer from Patrick's outstretched hand and murmured a quick 'thanks'.

Neither boy said anything for a while. Instead, they both sat listening to the crickets in the long grass in Patrick's front yard. The smell of freshly-mown grass was strong in the late evening as the Hockstetter's next door neighbour's gardener had left just ten minutes earlier. It was sweet and fresh to Henry who was used to the smell of cow manure and Rena at his own home - so he had to admit he loved hanging out at Patrick's house. It was ten o'clock and the fireflies were out already, lighting up the dusky sky with their flickering, hovering bodies. Patrick bit back the urge to teasingly tell Henry how romantic the porch looked at this time of night.

'Um,' began Henry, attracting Patrick's attention with a quick jab of his elbow, 'Maybe we should invite Vic n' Belch? It's kinda a lame party with just us two.'

'Aww...' moaned Patrick, giving Henry a pouty, puppy-dog look, 'But we can't do anything fun with them around!'

Henry blinked, 'I don't know what you mean by 'fun', fuck-face, but I'm calling Vic and Belch. Where's the phone?'

'Just in the hall...' sighed Patrick with a lazy point inside the house.

Without thanking the boy, Henry stormed inside his friend's house, simply glad he wouldn't be left alone with the 'homo' anymore.

Belch and Victor arrived together like always and threw themselves down on Patrick's porch, either side of Henry. Patrick sat opposite Henry, not quite sure what to do with himself. He wasn't entirely confident that Victor and Reginald liked him that well. He watched as their eyes wandered his home, half wanting to snap at them for making him feel so awkward in his own house!

'Err, um... I'll... go get some snacks,' Patrick said quietly, keeping his eyes averted from the two sometimes-friends.

'Man, I'm glad you're here!' Henry hissed at Victor and Belch, just discrete enough for Patrick not to hear, 'He was going all funny again, like homo weird!'

'Heh! Why are you even friends with that freak?' Belch laughed, waving his hand dismissively in the air. His knees were drawn up to his chest, making him look even more like a skeeter than usual. Victor sat on Henry's other side, resting his head against the gap in between two railings, his arms folded across his chest. 'I don't get it Henry, you've been hanging out with Patrick so much that I thought you'd forgotten about us!'

'No, Victor...' Henry whispered, cautious that Patrick was making snacks in the kitchen - the kitchen that had a window directly near where the three boys were speaking. An open window at that! *Shit! I Should really be more careful what I say near windows in future!* 'It's summer school. I've been so fuckin' busy with school and homework that I hadn't had time to hang out with you guys. That's all.'

'Really?' Belch raised his eyebrow cockily, 'Or have you been so 'busy' with Patrick that you haven't had time for us?'

Henry felt his face flush all over at that. He could tell Belch meant some kind of innuendo with what he said from his half-amused, half-malicious expression. Belch was rightfully crowned king of the innuendo! Before he could scream something insulting in reply, Patrick trotted out the front door carrying two large trays. In one bowl was popcorn - Henry guessed sweet - Patrick had a really big sweet tooth, and in the other were potato chips. A silver jug

containing what Henry knew was iced tea was overflowing, and Victor went over to help him carry the load.

'Ugh! Why bother with that shit, Patrick? We've got Budweiser, shit-for-brains!' Henry said, waving one already half-empty can in the air.

'Oh, sorry,' Patrick giggled, feeling just a little shy around Henry's two friends.

'Well... I'm fine with the iced tea,' Victor retorted, placing it sloppily on the floor in front of Henry and Belch. Belch looked up at him and gave him a questioning glance. 'On second thought, I've never been drunk before, so this should be fun!'

There was an awkward silence between the boys - the last time they'd seen each other was just over a fortnight ago when they'd gone to the Aladdin to see the Brain Eaters.

'Want one?' Henry asked Belch, who reluctantly took a can from Patrick's hand. He nodded in thanks then popped the can open, his face seeming just a little tense. After his first sip, Belch almost spat the strange brown liquid onto the floor it was so bitter. He laughed shakily, backhanding his mouth and told his friends how gross it tasted.

'Oh, don't be a baby!' Victor taunted, giving him a playful shove. Patrick suddenly grinned, remembering that time in the dump when he and Henry had ended up play fighting together.

'Shut up, baby,' Belch shot back, giving him a teasingly flirtatious wink just to get another reaction from Patrick, who laughed harder this time, shovelling a handful of popcorn into his mouth. 'Maybe it would taste better if it were on your lips?' At that, Patrick choked on the chips he was eating. Henry had gone silent, wondering what had gotten into his two friends since the last time they'd met. Were they doing this just to wind him up?

'I know you want to kiss me, Reginald,' smirked Victor with an over-exaggerated toss of his imaginary long hair, never usually using Belch's formal name but in jest. 'So just go ahead and do it!' He leaned across Henry's body (which had gone unusually frigid) and

wrapped his arms around Belch's neck, half sitting on Henry's lap. Patrick was crying with laughter, seeing Henry's extremely terrified, confused expression.

'Gawd! That's enough already!' Henry said after clearing his throat loudly, 'What, are you drunk already after just one sip of beer?!"

Both Victor and Belch burst out laughing, not caring that Patrick was in on the joke. 'We're just kidding you, man! Don't get so worked up! Chill!' Victor chortled, his face turning pink, still lying across his friend's knee.

'Aww, Henry! You're so cute when you're embarrassed!' Patrick simpered, his smile sarcastic and eyes burning like when his mother was having a particularly tough day and his father gets home asking where his tea is, ignoring all her feelings.

Henry growled a jumbled reply of insults and shoved another can of Budweiser into his friends hands'. His profile seemed angry, but deep down Henry almost wanted to laugh at his friends teasing. He ran a stressed hand through his greased, messy hair. 'Now, are you just going to stare at it or actually fucking drink it this time?'

The two greaser boys either side of Henry gave each other a smug glance. Mission accomplished. Henry was embarrassed.

Despite the liquor being absolutely disgusting, all four boys manged to finish the six pack between them, each ending up finishing the final two cans between them. Over the space of an hour, they were all drunken - never having drank alcohol before but a tiny amount at a distant relatives wedding party, or when they pass the wine around at Sunday's church service. Patrick didn't really care about what his parents thought of him anymore. Since the day they forced him to drink his 'sexual-correction' tea every morning, he decided they could think what they wanted of him, just as long as they didn't keep him from seeing Henry Bowers. However he couldn't help but feel this irritating niggle whenever he heard some neighbour's car pull into the drive way. Belch, Victor and Henry were all drunk out of their minds and Patrick was hardly sober himself but he could still feel himself panicking about the thought of his parents finding him with alcohol. That would be the final straw and Patrick realised that. His

parents were already reluctant to let him have friends over... The boy didn't know what he'd do with his summer if it weren't for Henry - he figured he'd probably be in Juniper Hills already when the Derry Police department find his secret fridge. Patrick felt himself cringing at the thought of it. It had been a while since his last kill and he had Henry to be thankful for that. Okay, he had to admit that he'd attempted to murder Stanley Uris just a few hours previous... But that hardly counted in his books - it's not like he tried to smother Stan in his Amana was it now?

'Patrick?' Henry slurred, giving him a sharp nudge with his elbow, 'Don't look so depressed! It's fucking annoying!'

'What?! I'm not depressed!' Patrick shrilled, his face flushed with colour. He gave Victor and Reginald a questioning glance, seemingly asking them why Henry was being so aggressive all of a sudden. They both shot him a 'don't ask me,' glare and went back to ranting about the Losers club. Puffing a strand of fringe out of his eyes, Patrick went back to huffily listening to their heated conversation, every so often giving a light-hearted giggle or a gasp of surprise and occasionally a yell of annoyance.

There was a break where Henry didn't say anything, and then... 'Yes you are, Pat! You're such a fucking fag!' Patrick narrowed his eyes in irritation - it didn't usually bother him when Henry called him names like that, but now was much different - Vic and Belch were around and it made him feel somehow more intimidated having older boys in his home. Victor and Belch stopped talking immediately, their expressions displaying both shock and embarrassment. For a moment Patrick just stared at Henry, daring him to say or do something more with the power of his mind. Belch gave a little cough, clearly wanting somebody to explain just what was going on. Victor suddenly became very fascinated with the rotting wood of Patrick's front porch, keeping his eyes trained on the gaps. Henry said nothing at all. His face remained livid. The silence was almost suffocating - and Patrick wanted to go back inside his house and throw himself down on his bed to leave his friends to talk outside alone. Henry was suddenly reminded of how long it had been since he last saw his two closest friends. Giving them both the iciest glare he could muster, Henry turned back towards Patrick. Thrusting his middle finger up in Belch's

face as he went, Henry gave a grunt of irritable laughter. With the sudden change of direction he felt his head spin nauseously from the liquor, and he really wished he hadn't drank so much. 'Umm, look... Sorry for yelling at you suddenly, I'm just so fucking drunk right now.' He let out a little chuckle, willing it to sound apologetic.

Patrick raised his eyebrows, a gesture he learnt from Belch, 'It's fine, Henry. Sincerely.' He felt the situation was getting kind of ridiculous and desperately wanted them all to just go home so he could simply go to bed and wait for his parents to get home. Every little noise made him flinch. Every distant beep of a horn or every screech of somebody's tires forced him back to the real world with a jerk. He'd had enough already and Henry was seriously pissing him off.

'Good!' Henry yelled in his typical boisterous manner, 'Now do your parents have any wine in their house?'

Patrick's glare deepened. He really didn't want to get in trouble with his parents but Henry was just taking it too far... Giving his hair a brush through with his stressed hand, he smirked evilly as he thought of a plan to get back at Henry for calling him an offensive name.

'Sure, Henry,' he simpered sweetly in his best imitation of his mother's tone of voice. Flashing his greaser friend a quick beautiful smile, he raced back into his house and jogged down to his parents wine cellar. Bravely flicking the switch on, Patrick carefully tested the first rotten wood step. He'd never been down in the cellar before as his father had forbidden it - and his house was rather old. Victorian, he quite often liked to think. Sure enough the first few steps were safe and Patrick quickly stumbled down the remaining ones. When he was younger Patrick was scared there could be monsters down there and that was the reason why his dad wouldn't allow him down there, in interest of his own safety. Now, Patrick knew it was because they didn't trust him to behave. Swallowing his sudden sense of shame, the twelve year old grabbed the first two bottles he could lay eyes on. He didn't suppose it mattered to Henry whether they were red, white or rose - so he simply chose the two most inexpensive ones out of the vast selection.

The three greaser boys stopped talking as Patrick reappeared. He guessed they were talking about him and gave a mental shrug to the

thought of it. If they were going to act like best buddies again, then that was just A-okay with him. 'Here,' Patrick huffed, out of breath from all the stairs down to the basement, 'These okay?'

'That's great, Princess Patrick,' Henry looked up and giggled, thrilled with his new, insulting nickname for his peer. Belch and Victor joined in crowing with laughter and the younger boy gave each of them a hardened glare. Snatching the two bottles from Patrick's arms, Henry almost dropped them and gave a little cry of surprise. 'Oh, God!'

Patrick pulled a tongue and drifted off into his own little world, leaving his friends to get drunk and praying his parents would be back soon. After another thirty minutes, Patrick could hear that their conversation was flagging. The three fourteen year olds were crashed out together, all slumping against the balcony, their expressions each displaying exhaustion. Henry in particular. His face was flushed a bright red as he were the one that had consumed the most, being the leader of the gang.

The twelve year old gave a sneaky little titter as he remembered his secret plan to humiliate Henry. His older friend glanced up in surprise as Patrick towered over him - his face flushed but not entirely from the alcohol's influence - and his slightly chubby body inches from his face. Henry was just about to complain of Patrick being so close to him when out of nowhere, the younger boy flung himself down on his lap, wrapping his legs around his waist and his arms around his neck. Belch and Victor certainly were shocked but were too drunk to do anything but laugh themselves into hysterics. Bowers froze up, not entirely sure of what was happening. Before he could yell at Patrick to get off or to go kill himself, Patrick's wet, livery lips were already against his own, his mouth slightly parted and tasting strongly of Budweisers. His tongue quickly darted against Henry's mouth before he could push Patrick off his knee - and Victor was seemingly laughing so hard that he had to rush inside to use the bathroom. On any typical day, the two boys would despise any man who openly kissed another male, but today they actually found it hilarious as they were absolutely smashed. Belch stared in mixed confusion and fascination, his own mouth slightly agape and wondering what the hell would happen if anybody from Derry Elementary found out about this incident.

The younger boy broke apart from the greaser at the sound of tires crackling on gravel. Henry helplessly watched as Patrick stumbled off his lap and began to collect empty beer cans and bottles of wine from the floor. His expression was so pathetically desperate that Henry found himself getting to his feet to help. Gesturing frantically for Belch to join in, the older boy gathered as many empty cans as he could carry and threw them into a nearby bush. Out of the corner of Belch's eye, he could see a pretty, young-ish woman hopping out of a '54 Volkswagen, smiling from ear to ear - he guessed that was Patrick's mom - he looked like her a lot. Out of sheer luck, Henry and Belch just managed to escape from Patrick's house via the back gate before Mr and Mrs Hockstetter could notice them. Patrick stood outside on the porch, his body frigid and his expression a wide, phony grimace. His eyes looked too bright and his face too pink in Josephine's opinion.

'Hey, Patty. What are you doing out here? You haven't been outside all this time waiting for us, have you?' his mother cooed worriedly, clicking down the gravel path to join her son's side and wrap him in an embrace. Ronald followed not far behind her, his face displaying pure suspicion. Unfortunately, Victor Criss wasn't as lucky as his friends to escape, and had only just got back from the bathroom in a mixed state of drunkenness and confusion, wondering where on earth his two friends had got to and who these two strangers were.

'Oh, who's this, Patrick?' Josephine asked amusedly, quite surprised to see somebody new in her house - especially seeing as her son had been rather forcefully told no friends were allowed tonight. Victor blinked dumbly at her, not sure whether it was his place to introduce himself or not. Patrick seemingly wasn't going to say anything; he had gone into one of his catatonic states, so Vic cleared his throat and made his introduction before running away quickly.

Patrick's parents stared after the boy, wondering what he was doing there. A horrible thought played in Mr Hockstetter's mind as he mused over who Victor was to his strange son. He gave Patrick a quick stern glance before storming into his home and slamming the front door, obviously very mad as the door splintered in its frame, causing Josephine to jump and shield her face in shock.

To make a light-hearted joke, Josephine turned towards her son and

said, 'Was that your boyfriend, Patrick? He's quite handsome!' She waggled her eyebrows in jest and Patrick couldn't help but giggle despite how humiliated he felt. Obviously he'd have to explain to his dad later that Victor wasn't his boyfriend, and that he was very sorry for having a friend round when they especially told him not to, and also that he wouldn't ever let it happen again. It sure was a good job that they'd managed to get rid of all those cans of beer before his parents turned up - otherwise he'd be grounded for the remainder of the holidays - Patrick didn't think he could deal with that if it were to happen! He had too much to do...

## 11. Chapter 11

1

'Are you alright, man?!" *Mike*.

'Hey, Stan! What the fuck happened?' *Richie*.

'Stanny! It's alright, everything's fine. Jus... just don't go to sleep. We'll get you to hospital if you need it...' *Ben*.

'Stan! Stan! Listen to me!' *Beverly*.

'Just take it easy. We'll look after you. Everything will be fine, buddy, so don't worry.' *Eddie*.

Stan lay fazed and rattled on the grass of Memorial Park, Derry. He could only half hear the soothing voices of his six closest friends, but to be perfectly honest all he wanted to do was sleep. Sleep forever under six feet of earth. Stan had finally had enough. He was the weakest of the Losers club and boy - didn't *everyone* know it?!

'E-e-enough!' Bill's voice rang loudest of all. 'E-eh-everyone just b-back off, okay?'

Murmurs of 'fuck you' and 'whatever' were heard by Bill but that doesn't mean he took any notice of them. To Bill, Stan's weakened state meant that he'd really want to be left alone. He could see in Stan's eyes that all he wanted was some peace and quiet. Beads of sweat stood out on his deathly pale face as he unconsciously muttered the names of birds under his breath. *Blue tit...* *Black bird...* *Speckled dove...* *Sparrow...* Stan looked as close to a panic-attack as Bill had ever seen a person. He rocked himself gently, trembling arms clasped tightly to his gasping body, nails gripping his once-clean shirt as tight as death. His hair was soaking wet and he hadn't even bothered to dry his face of the water and pond muck. This was very unusual for Stanley Uris. He loved to be clean more than Richie loved doing voices - more than Ben liked to read.

'Wait - Bill's right,' began Richie, fiddling with his thumbs as he

spoke, 'Give him some space, guys... He doesn't look so hot.' Trashmouth gave his gang a knowing nod and a smile, positive what he was doing was right. Immediately the other five backed away a few metres, leaving Richie to look after his closest friend. It had annoyed them of course but they wanted the best for Stan.

'Hey there, man,' Richie said, suddenly feeling conscious of all the Loser's eyes on him and him alone. He had an audience. Placing a comforting hand on Stan's shoulder, he leaned closer and made his tone as gentle as possible; 'You want to tell us what happened?'

Stan attempted a croak but all that would come out was vomit. Richie averted his eyes respectfully, his own stomach turning. The rest of the Losers club stared with sympathetic eyes. With tears in his own eyes, Stan shook his head miserably - there was no way he could speak anytime soon without heaving all his guts up over his new shoes. Heat prickled his skin and sweat ran down his cheeks, mingling with the tears despite how cold Stan was feeling. Ben began to bite his hangnail as Stan's shivering became violent.

'Perhaps we should take him to the hospital?' Ben fretted, his face pinched with worry and almost as pale as Stan's own.

'Yeah, and get Patrick sent to Juniper Hills,' Beverly snapped, causing Ben's heart to sink. 'Do that... and don't you realise Bowers will never get off our cases? It will make him a million times more angry with us if we rat Patrick out and get him sent away.'

'S-so w-w-we're jus-just gonna l-l-l-let H-h-h-Hockstetter skip free?' Bill hissed, never usually taking that tone with Beverly Marsh.

Beverly shot him an icy glare, obviously disgusted, 'I don't know! We can't let them know what happened though! Aren't they gonna ask us all kinds of questions if we turn up with Stan having hypothermia in the middle of summer?! *Oh yes! Sorry, I forgot! We were just simply hanging around the Arctic when Stan caught his death!*'

Her deeply sarcastic tone would have made Richie laugh on any other day - but today was much too serious for so much as a snicker. 'We can't just leave him to go home like this, Beverly! He needs to see a doctor or he'll get sick.' Ben murmured before Richie could so much

as open his mouth. 'Stan? Do you think you need a doctor?'

Stan managed a brave smile - so brave despite how terrified he was feeling that Beverly almost felt she could cry for the boy - his smile turning to a frozen look of terror as he realised he couldn't find his Bird-spotting Manual. Whimpers escalated from his throat causing his friends to whip around in fear, wondering what he could have seen behind them.

'What's wrong?' Mike asked solemnly, realising there was no danger just Stan panicking as a late reaction to the trauma he'd just faced. 'Can you see somethin'?

Stan shook his head vigorously at Mike and went back to mouthing the names of birds. *Green finch, yellow canary, robin... Starling... Seagull...*

All six of the Losers exchanged anxious looks. Obviously Stan needed some kind of medical attention; he was damn near hysteria! Every few minutes he would start fresh blubbering in fits and bursts, eventually stopping and then picking up where he left off from last time. Richie rubbed his back in comfort, not quite certain how he could help his friend without hurting him.

'S-s-Stan... W-w-we n-nuh-need y-you t-to tell u-uh-uh-us what happened s-so w-w-w-w-we c-c-can help you.'

The eleven year-old glanced up at his friend and leader, feeling like a small kid in comparison to Big Bill. His eyes filled with fresh tears as he weakly rasped; 'Hockstetter drowned me... He nearly... *killed* me.'

'We know it was Hockstetter,' Richie said a little too loudly for Stan's comfort, suddenly irritated in his moment of worry, 'But what did you do to provoke him?'

'He didn't do anything! It was that big, crazy Hockstetter doing everything Henry tells him to! Don't you think Patrick would drown Stan if he didn't have some massive crush on Henry Bowers?'

There were some murmurs of agreement. Stan could still only hear some parts of the conversation - they got tangled and confused in his

brain that just couldn't seem to stay focused on the real world. Instead of listening to his friends, Stan focused on bird song in the distance. Somehow he felt calmer listening to their singing.

Stan began to warily get to his hands and knees. His friends stared as he trembled to his feet, using Richie as a make-shift crutch. Still trembling like a leaf, the young boy slowly began to get a grip on the situation; Patrick had tried to kill him and failed. Patrick was insane. Stan was still alive and Patrick had gotten free... A glare formed on Stan's face, mirroring his friends' equally furious expressions. *I don't want to be the weaker member of the Losers Club any longer. I want to be as brave and strong as Big Bill. Why should we be so afraid of Patrick Hockstetter? He's just some fanatical crazy boy with a big crush on someone as equally mad as him! I want Patrick and Henry to get what's coming to them... I want them to be sent away... I'm sick of living my life afraid that Henry Bowers might be around the next corner. Next year I want 7th grade to be a happy memory. I don't want to be anywhere near those loons. If I'm in their class, I swear I'll just-*

'I'm fine. Really... I just needed a moment,' Stan whispered hoarsely.

Nobody believed him. Instead of trying to persuade him to let them take care of him, the Losers club each went their separate ways home, each as downhearted as the next. Both Richie and Ben wrapped their arms around his middle and trailed at a comfortable pace back to Stan's home. If they went any faster Stan would begin to complain and clutch at his wet shirt in anxiety. About twenty minutes later when they eventually reached Stan's house, his mother hardly said a word to them; instead, gave Stan one look and burst into tears, obviously sensing something awful had happened from both the atmosphere and the sirens wailing in the distance. His father joined her at the door and frowned worriedly, his brow deepening and the corners of his mouth sagging so much that Ben himself felt he would begin to cry just like Stan's mother. Not one asked what happened and instead took their traumatised son off the two boys and turned back to the parlour, hardly even thanking them for their help. All they could get out of him was the same lines over and over: 'I lost my Bird-spotting Manual... I lost my book. I want it back.' Any other day, being probably the most sensible and logical boy in Derry, Stan would admit he was being ridiculous. Today, he just didn't care to be

mature and laid-back - he almost died and his bird book was missing. All he could do was cry along with his mother. Right now, he didn't even know what he was crying about; he was safe, he was now warm, his mother had given him something to soothe his stomach and some herbal tea, his father had promised him a brand new bird-spotting book and a pair of top-class binoculars to make up for the ones that broke and not only that - but Mrs Uris had called the police and reported the incident so there was no way Stan could wind up getting hurt like that again. Yet, he refused to tell her just who hurt him so there wasn't much the police could do for them...

Laying in bed without his book by his bedside table, Stan couldn't concentrate on falling asleep. Typically that was something that came naturally to him. His mother began to grow worried over time; Stan still not telling her what caused him to panic so much. He'd only tell her it was because he misplaced his bird bible, and that she shouldn't be so worried about him all the time. Despite all his fussing and excuses, Mrs Uris wondered if it were something to do with the paedophile stalking Derry, killing both boys and girls by random. If he'd been abused, why wouldn't he tell her? Mrs Uris bit down on her nails and cried, desperately hoping that her son hadn't been attacked by some horrible monster of a man. What she didn't know however (many other parents of Derry included) was that actually, that 'paedophile monster' was a real monster living in the sewers. Once you get past adolescence you stop believing in those kinds of things. After all, it's not always the adults that know best. Sometimes kids can be right too, you know?

None of Stan's friends found sleep easy to come by that night. The situation had been close. Too close. Who was to say Henry and Patrick couldn't have succeeded if it weren't for Patrick being such a weakling? Sure he was pudgy. Sure he was only five-foot-five... But he was crazy alright! Don't crazy people like Hockstetter have no sense of hurting or being hurt?

## 12. Chapter 12

1

Brushing a trembling hand through his DA, Henry began to grow anxious. Derry Elementary ran a summer school for the unfortunate kids who couldn't quite keep up with the curriculum, and amongst them were the infamous Henry Bowers and Patrick Hockstetter. By the skin of their teeth, Victor Criss and Reginald 'Belch' Huggins had just managed to escape the torture and boredom of the programme, but their good friend and leader, Henry hadn't been so lucky. Today, Henry would prepare for the final exam coming up in early August - and he had to admit to himself that he had worked hard. His father had been pressuring him from one end, Pennywise from the other (Patrick's mother had also bribed both boys with the promise of home-made chocolate chip cookies if they'd just revise together for an hour or two every day).

Henry bit onto the lid of his fountain pen and at the same time bumped out the rhythm to Elvis Presley's 'Hound dog' on his desk's leg. Well, until Mr Cassidy had stopped by and told him to be quiet as others were trying to work. The veins in his forehead stood out as the blood pounded in his head. There was always one exam question in particular that had always puzzled the boy: 'Explain what an element is and give five examples of them.' *How the hell am I supposed to know? I really don't give a fuck about science but my father will kick my ass if I flunk out again...*

Looking up from over his practice exam paper, Henry stole a glance at Patrick Hockstetter. Henry knew he was far behind Patrick; although looking at Patrick's paper right now, all he could see was a large and rather well drawn-out picture of a fancy question mark. Snickering, Henry got back to his own work. 'Expand the following equations' brackets -  $3(x + 2x) + 2(3x - 4)$ ' Oh God...

'Patrick... Patrick! Listen to me,' Henry hissed across the room, 'Do you get *any* of this? I'm so gonna end up flunking out.'

Patrick acted as if he couldn't hear the older boy. 'Don't act deaf you pansy! Tell me the answer!'

'Mr Bowers,' Mr Cassidy drawled, looking down his bespectacled nose at the boy, 'Please do leave Hockstetter alone and get back to work. Can't you see he's trying his hardest to achieve success?' *Obviously the old bastard's never even glanced at Patrick's test paper.*

Giving the old man a scowl Henry decided to simply answer the questions another day. *After all, it's summer, it's too hot to think and I ain't no good at Chemistry or Algebra.* In between the folds of his Science text book, Henry had slipped a torn off piece of lined paper. He quite enjoyed doodling when he was supposed to be working. He supposed it was a hobby of his besides tormenting people just for the heck of it and throwing cherry bombs out at the dump. Out of the corner of his eye, Henry dared to give Patrick another look. He could only see him in profile, but he still admired the way the light shone on his dirty-blond hair. Swapping his pen for a rather blunt pencil, Henry got to work on sketching Patrick from where he was sat.

Henry had no idea why he was drawing Patrick Hockstetter. Just the other day the pair had something of a fallout and Patrick had been acting funny since. He had taken to murmuring things under his breath more than usual - and stuffed into the cuff of his shirt was a large wad of toilet paper and handkerchiefs. His eyes would skim the room, wide with fear and brimming with tears from time to time. Any other day Henry would have probably thought this very funny - after all, Henry thrived on others' pain and misery. Yet he couldn't help but feel partially responsible for Patrick's little breakdown. *If I had been there with him then maybe this wouldn't have happened.*

'Patrick,' Henry whispered, waving his hands fanatically in the air, 'Look here, Patrick. I've drawn something for you.'

Patrick turned around and gave Henry a dirty look, his green eyes turning misty once again and his lower lip trembling.

'Patrick! Just listen to me, would you?!" Henry exclaimed angrily, banging his fingernails irritably on the table.

'Bowers! Just concentrate on your work. Now! Leave Mr Hockstetter alone.' Mr Cassidy bellowed from over at his desk. 'You can sort out your lovers quarrel later in your own time.' With that, the classroom howled with boyish laughter. Mr Cassidy looked rather pleased with

his little gag.

'But I can't sir. I just don't get-'

The classroom door swung open, distracting Mr Cassidy from telling Henry off any further. A pretty young woman scrambled through, embarrassed by the amount of attention she attracted from the boys, and whispered something into the teacher's ear. He seemed to not quite hear her, and screwed up his face in over-exaggerated confusion. Mr Cassidy made sullen eye-contact with Henry and waved him over with one gnarled old hand.

'C'mere, boy,' There was almost a slight tone of sympathy in his voice, and Henry knew this could be either very good or very bad - 'Mr Hart would like to speak to you in his office.'

'Why?'

Cassidy's forehead wrinkled even more, 'Don't ask why, boy. Just go.'

The whole class stared as Henry trailed miserably through the door the young woman was holding open for him. Slumping because of the humidity, and giving the door frame a little kick out of aggression, Henry knew to expect the worst and prepare for it.

## 2

There was a tap on Henry's left shoulder. Whipping around to see who it was, there was nobody there. Turning to his right, Patrick was sat next to him grinning a sickly sweet smile that in all honesty, gave Henry the creeps. Mr Hart hadn't arrived just yet so the boys had a chance to talk; much to Henry's displeasure.

'Thanks for ignoring me, jackass,' Henry hissed, leaning closer to Patrick so Mr Hart's secretary wouldn't overhear, 'Especially seeing as I fuckin'-'

Patrick waved a dismissive hand in the air and that ended the conversation. Still, that disturbing smile was plastered on his face.

'You're fucking *dead*, Hockstetter.'

'Oh, please,' Patrick whispered with a roll of his eyes. Henry could see him clenching his handkerchiefs tightly through his shirt. His nails dug into the starchy cotton. *Obviously he's never been threatened by me before. I should do that more often.*

'Good afternoon, gentlemen,' Came a voice from the corridor, making Henry jump to attention - he had slipped back into his daydreams from the day before. Mr Hart walked in with the air of a man who found himself to be very important. He was tall and barrel-chested, yet whenever he talked he sounded like he had the lung cancer that everybody was talking about nowadays...

Mumbling a garbled 'Afternoon,' both boys averted their eyes from both each other and the teacher. Obviously they weren't in here for a good reason; but at least they were out of the heat. Keeping his eyes on the wall, Henry racked his brains wondering what he could have done this time. For the past week he had been on his best behaviour, and Mr Hart had praised him for his efforts. Yet, just yesterday the Terrible Awful thing had happened, but Henry had no idea how Hart could have found out about *that*.

'Do you know why you're in here?' Mr Hart began, reclining against his desk and crossing his long legs.

'No, sir,' Henry murmured.

Patrick gave an odd shake of the head.

'Are you sure?'

'Yessir.'

'*Henry*,' Mr Hart put a lot of pressure on that first word, 'Do you really think I was born yesterday?'

Biting back a cheeky response, Henry lowered his eyes to the carpet.

'Nothing? Alright then. I'll ask Patrick instead,' Hart turned towards Patrick, his eyes sharp and keen, 'Patrick, could you *please* tell me what happened yesterday, as Bowers is not feeling too chatty today.'

Patrick bit on a thumbnail. Hesitated. Blinked a few times, then...

'Nothing happened, Mr Hart. Henry and I were out playing at my house.' He had to admit it sounded dumb, but it was far better than telling the truth.

'Really?'

'Yessir,' Henry rasped again, wiping his sweaty palms on his jeans. He resisted the urge to do something bad to Patrick.

'I've had a phone call, boys. No, not just *one*, but *three*,' Hart smirked grimly, picking up a pencil and wiping imaginary dust from it. Despite the heat not a bead of sweat covered his face. 'Do you have any idea what this is about?'

*Oh, shut up you old fool and just get this over with!*

'No. No sir, I don't.' Patrick was reminded of how liars go to hell.

### 3

The sun blazed down on two boys curled up on the lawn of Derry's Memorial Park. At a first glance one might have thought the pair were cuddling by the fountain, and would have walked away rather puzzled. However, as Patrick burst free of his almost catatonic state, he found he and Stan were not quite alone.

'Y-y-you ju-just leave hi-m-m alone, p-puh-pansy!' Bill hollered from across the length of the grass. His eyes were blazing with fury and he looked just about ready to kill somebody.

'We're coming over and we're going to fucking kill you, Patrick,' Beverly screeched, 'I'm sick of yours and Henry's bullshit. Pick on somebody your own size!'

Coming about his senses, Patrick gave a dull laugh. With a deadpanned voice, he added: 'See if I care. If I die, you die, and I can't even be killed!'

'Ohh, you are *so stupid*. I just can't believe you could even think that, mush-for-brains.' Richie chuckled, marvelling at how retarded some people could actually be, 'Go any further, and we *will* kill you.'

Patrick gained a tighter grasp on Stan's limp, soggy body as if he were a lifesaver or a stuffed teddy bear, 'I don't believe you.'

That was enough for Beverly Marsh; 'Try us, fag!' she roared, charging forwards, oddly beautiful in her anger. Ben gasped in awe as she loaded her slingshot in one swift motion and fired directly between Patrick's dusty eyes. The melted down silver missed the boy by literally a few millimetres and skimmed past his ear, grazing it and drawing blood.

'L-let h-him go. Now,' Bill hissed, dark shadows crossed his eleven year old face, making him look a whole lot older.

Patrick had no intention whatsoever of letting Stan Uris go. In fact, he hugged him even closer until Stan was practically sat on his lap, head resting weakly against the lip of the fountain. Repressing a tremble of rage, Beverly loaded her slingshot once again. She had willed herself not to miss her target again. With pride, she launched her second bullet through the air and it cut into Patrick's cheek. Blood splattered against his face, looking morbid against the fairness of his skin and hair.

Richie let out a cry of triumph and Beverly high-fived him, cheeks blazing with pride. Instead of being angry Patrick was deathly calm. So calm, in fact, that the world seemed entirely in black and white to him. The black was the Losers club, bad for Pennywise and bad for Henry. The white was himself and Henry, making sure the Losers wouldn't live another day.

'Let me tell you, kid,' Began Mike solemnly, 'In case you don't know, you're on the right track for dying. And if you're not feeling particularly suicidal today, you should haul some ass before we hand it to you on a plate.'

Patrick stared.

'Wow, you've got some balls, Hockstetter. Now hand him over,' Richie snarled, suddenly becoming furious about the fact Patrick very nearly drowned his bestest friend. For a while, the two groups of children stood wearily looking each other up and down. What were the odds for Patrick beating them in a fight? He was only five-foot-five. He

was also pudgy.

#### 4

Henry was annoyed. Annoyed that Patrick had told *him* to shut up. Annoyed that Patrick could even look him in the eye. Annoyed remembering that time at the dump where Patrick had kissed him full on the lips. As his father pulled into the drive way, Henry decided the day was too hot for picking corn. It was also too hot for stabbing Losers for that matter.

'Dad, I'm going to the shops to get some Cool Aid. Want some?'

His dad ignored him, lost in his own world. Henry shrugged in a suit-yourself gesture and ran off down the dusty tracks before his father could even realise what just happened. Wow, he'd be getting a beating later.

#### 5

Soon realising his mistake, Patrick let out a small howl of fury. Blood trickled down his pasty face and he could feel something must be broken. *My mom's gonna be so upset with me...*

He'd been tricked into handing Uris over. Laying alone on the grass, he could hear the crickets humming, and somewhere in the distance, the sound of police cars wailing. Taking his time to sit back up, he rested his bleeding head where Stan had not so long ago. He was dizzy. Beverly Marsh sure had got him! Resisting the urge to puke, Patrick pulled himself up to his knees and took in the scene before him; blood was everywhere. Not just down his starchy shirt and sweater vest, but all over the grass and all over the fountain. Not a Loser was in sight.

Somehow he just couldn't remember what happened. All Patrick knew was that his head hurt like hell and all he wanted was his mom.

The sun was now setting and Patrick had a chance to admire the birds that Stan loved so much. *I see why he thinks they're so beautiful. God, I wish I had my fridge right now.* The sirens were getting louder and Patrick's head burst with pain at every slight noise. Now pulling

himself to his feet, Patrick considered his options; fight or flight. Which was it to be?

## 6

Henry Bowers could have puked. Laying there in the long grass against the fountain was the slumped body of Patrick Hockstetter.

When he had called over to him, he hadn't quite heard the mumbled reply to 'go away...'

'Patrick! What the fuck happened?!"

Tears pooled in Patrick's eyes. Henry had never seen Patrick display much emotion before and it came as quite a shock. Throwing himself to his knees besides the boy, Henry could see that Patrick had fainted. His skin was paler than usual (if that was even possible) and he was all weak and floppy instead of the enigmatic, amiable Patrick that Henry would typically see.

As if it were some kind of afternoon TV programme featuring a murder mystery, Henry winced as he heard sirens screaming in the silence. Sure enough, they were for Patrick.

'C'mere, buddy. We need to leave.'

'...No,' Patrick whispered, hiding his face from his friend, 'I've been bad. The Losers got away.'

'Are you just gonna let the police get you like this?' Henry growled, grabbing him by the arm and pulling him up. Being weak from lack of blood, Patrick slumped against him. This time Henry didn't mind so much.

'Either way, we're dead boys, Henry. Can't you see?'

'Shut your mouth, Patrick. You don't know anything!'

Despite the aggression, Henry's heart was thundering under his shirt. He knew all too well that Patrick and himself were dead meat - not only once but *twice* they had failed to kill the Losers. Pennywise was not at all happy.

'Patrick! We need to go! Now!'

Patrick attempted to stand but soon slid back down to the earth, face in a grimace of pain. Henry watched helplessly as Patrick threw up at his feet.

*If we get caught now... It's all over. Everything.*

Instead of wasting time waiting for Patrick to gain strength and leave, Henry hauled him up from under his armpits and lifted him over his shoulder. Working most of his life on his father's farm had made him awfully strong for a 14 year old. Patrick groaned nauseously and hung limply over his back.

'What the fuck happened?' Henry repeated. This time his voice was desperate as he jogged as fast as he could out of Memorial Park.

Patrick didn't waste his breath. He felt he was going to be sick again. Slipping into a daze, he relaxed himself against Henry's body. It would have been perfect for him if it weren't for the constant churning of his stomach.

Obviously somebody had seen the Losers and all that blood and called the police; Patrick didn't care. Patrick really didn't care. *Tell if you want, I don't care. I'll just hurt you twice as hard next time, Stanley Uris. Everybody can point the finger at me - saying 'he's the one that tried to drown Stanley Uris!' - but I don't care. They're dead. I'll kill them all.*

7

'I hope you know this is a serious matter, boys,' Mr Hart lamented, giving each a stern glance in turn, 'Killing is wrong. Killing is evil. You'll go to Hell for killing people, boys... Think about it... Just what in the world possessed you to do such a thing, Patrick? What did Stan ever do to you? I'm truly shocked. No, I'm dismayed. And I can't believe I waited another day to talk to you on this matter; your parents will be getting a call, Mr Hockstetter. You're lucky I didn't call the police in right away. If you hadn't ran away like a coward, you could be in jail right now.'

'As for you, Henry. You're also in on this - I can tell. Now, you may

not be involved in the... a-attempted drowning, but you certainly helped Patrick get away. An eyewitness account told me that-'

Henry let out a snarl of discontent. Patrick blinked in surprise - he didn't think they'd get caught so quickly. Both boys turned two different colours; Patrick white and Henry red.

'Can I continue? The eyewitness, who would rather remain anomaly, told me that you helped Patrick away from the scene. Is this correct?'

Sighing, Henry gave a brief nod of his head. He could hear Patrick quietly snivelling into his hankie. A cowlick fell into his eyes sparkling with angry tears.

'You do know the police are bound to get involved sooner or later?' Mr Hart whispered sullenly.

Both nodded with tears in their eyes.

## 8

Patrick was five years old when Avery died. His mother had been distraught, his father heartbroken. Instead of sharing their sadness, Patrick was numb. At first the doctors just assumed he was in shock and would eventually come to terms with his baby brother's death - however, nobody knew Patrick Hockstetter was a sociopath from the day he was born. And, perhaps he will be until the day he dies.

After Avery died in December there was a month or two where Patrick would be ignored by both his parents. They were too busy grieving the death of their youngest son to compliment Patrick's dark squiggle of a Christmas Turkey, or perhaps some day a boy, or a self-portrait. Whatever. Patrick didn't care. They could ignore him all they liked just as long as they didn't interrupt his secret plans and rituals.

It was that joy whilst killing Avery that gave him the urge to kill all those animals in his Amana. Also, it was also that pleasure he thrived on to give him some kind of sick thrill whilst attempting to drown Stan or slit Eddie's throat.

At first Josephine couldn't believe the phone call home she'd received

from a Mr Hart. How could her precious son possibly hurt somebody like that? It all came back to her from the day her youngest son had died. No... She couldn't quite believe it. She wouldn't believe it... Instead, she pushed it to the back of her mind along with the fact she was currently not responding to her cancer treatment; and also that children in Derry were now dropping dead like flies. Nowadays she dared anything to try and shock her - She'd been through it all.

Patrick had cried in his room for a little while; refusing to eat his tea and ignoring the cupcakes his mother had sneakily left him in compensation. Usually when in trouble he'd feel empty and utterly refused that he had done anything wrong. Today he could do nothing but sob into his pillow and block out the cooing noises his mom was making through the door. He briefly wondered if Henry was doing the same (well, if Oscar Bowers hadn't *murdered* him yet.) and then decided that he didn't care either way. From the back of his mind Patrick knew that Henry had ratted him out.

When Mr Hart had called the parents of both boys, he had specifically requested the police to allow for a psychiatric evaluation - what boy in his right mind would attempt to kill his classmate right out of the blue?! Mrs Hockstetter had been reluctant, but then slept on it, tossing and turning all night. In the end, she decided it was simply for the best. If her Patrick was mentally disabled, then so be it. She'd still love him no matter what. He was the world to her.

Mr Bowers senior had been a different case altogether. He has screamed and ranted down the phone that no son of his was bat shit-crazy, and that if they even booked him an appointment he would sue.

## 9

It was after curfew. Both boys had disregard for the rules and didn't care who knew it. Just the other day Henry and Patrick had been banned altogether from seeing each other. It was hard - they had to admit. Being in such an uneasy state, both boys had hardly touched their food and were now suffering the consequences. Tomorrow, they'd be interviewed one by one by a 'special' doctor. One of those doctors that sat you down in a room full of different chairs and asked you about your troubles. Neither Henry nor Patrick had any desire to

disclose anything to that kind of doctor, but in the end they knew they'd have to come clean with why they attempted to kill Stanley Uris...

'I miss you, Henry,' Patrick simpered, his head resting on Henry's lap. Both boys let out a nervous giggle and decided to spend the rest of the evening not talking at all.

Henry broke apart from Patrick's kiss and stared him fully in the eyes. He had the look of a person searching for the answer to a difficult equation: 'Maybe... Maybe this is for the best for us,' he began, 'Maybe this 'Pennywise' character was... all in my head.'

'As if I'd be stupid enough to blindly believe you if I hadn't seen Pennywise too,' Patrick scoffed, attempting to go back to kissing Henry's jawline, 'I would have just thought you were bat-shit and got on with life!'

'You... saw him too?'

'Yeah, man! On the moon, at Sundae's... He was everywhere! Sometimes he would even be in my bedroom late at night.'

'Oh,' was all Henry said. He left it at that.

## 10

The next evening the boys had met again and spent it exactly as they had the night before; making small talk in between making out. If the adults had thought segregating Henry and Patrick would loosen their bond, they were certainly wrong. If anything, it had brought them closer together.

Yesterday the doctors had talked to them. There was a young woman with a notebook and pen, an old, kind-looking man with little to no hair and a middle-aged woman by the name of Annie. Henry found it was odd that she'd allowed him to address her by her first name. But then he remembered - *I'm here to be called crazy! I'm here to tell the doctors I tried to kill some people because I felt depressed about life, or whatever bullshit they want me to feed them, and then they'll take me and Patrick away to Juniper Hills where we'll live and die together.*

In Henry's case, the three doctors had listened attentively to his story about this 'clown called Pennywise on the moon.' Sure enough, they declared him as having symptoms of a psychosis. After talking for another hour and a half (Henry was getting tired of talking and felt himself becoming ashamed) they had finally gotten a feel for the boy - Henry Bowers was a Schizophrenic. He was paranoid, delusional and often suffered from both auditory and visual disturbances. Not only that, but he seemed to have periods where he felt particularly low in mood; anxious and depressed.

This of course was a dirty lie and Henry refused point blank to listen to them. His father was equally as reluctant.

With Patrick, the doctors had listened to his tale with an equal amount of interest and sympathy. From the moment he started speaking, at least one of the doctors knew they were conversing with a Sociopath. He had seemed deeply in love with himself (and maybe even the boy they'd just interviewed before? Who knows? They'll investigate that at a later date) with a high sense of grandiose. Once they had came close to discovering about Avery, and Patrick had quickly dodged the question Patrick's dad had discreetly asked them to place in the interview: 'What did you feel on the day your baby brother died?' The boy had answered every question emotionlessly. Almost coldly in manner. He had told them everything; about the beetles and his mother's sewing needles, about the cats and dogs and the Amana, about how much he wanted to please Henry... At the end of the interview, the doctors felt they knew the boys quite well.

How unfortunate it was for these two boys to meet. Perhaps if they hadn't ever met, then maybe they wouldn't be in this mess?

## 13. Chapter 13

1

'Good, you're here,' Henry drawled, arrogant as usual, 'I thought you'd never fucking show up.' Despite his cocky demeanour, Patrick could tell the greaser was feeling down in the dumps. His hair was straggly and it seemed he hadn't bothered with his usual DA today - instead were his long, shiny black bangs, too long in fact that they trailed into his dark eyes, giving him an almost mad, rugged look. Patrick thought this was a good look for him. It was wild, almost like his own but dark where his own hair was fair. Cowlicks stood up on end, almost although he'd received an electric shock - and instead of being slicked back in perfect imitation of his rock n' roll star heroes, it was almost wavy on the ends.

Instead of taking the time to say a greeting, Patrick raised a speculative eyebrow and gave Henry the usual full-body scan.

'Hey, what happened to your hands?' Patrick asked, innocent, but with a thin trace of amusement.

Henry's eyes widened then darted to the left away from Patrick's. Moistening his lips, Henry remembered he didn't have to lie so much around Patrick. He was cool. 'My dad...' he admitted, hiding his bandaged fingers in the sleeve of his leather jacket, 'He was real mad, y'know. You should have seen him.'

'Tell me!' Patrick yelled, almost sounding angry. He didn't like to see Henry hurt. It wasn't a good look on him. Kids like Eddie Kaspbrak, or that stupid Eddie Corcoran, then sure. Fine. Cool. Henry? Not so hot... It was like seeing something you shouldn't - something that would get you hurt yourself. If you got in too deep, that is.

'Well,' he began, averting his eyes again, 'The other day, we got a letter from those fucking-A doctors, and it said I was sc.. Schizo-schizophrenic or whatever, but you already know that. Anyway, he got real mad, and slammed the screen door shut on my fingers when I was about to walk into the backyard.'

Patrick made an almost comforting noise but it got stuck in his dry throat.

'Said he didn't want no fucking mad son.' Henry added, shaking his head sadly. His eyes looked almost tearful, and Patrick found himself cupping his bandaged fingers in his own. That was until Henry slapped him away.

'Don't act all sorry! This is all your fault, Hockstetter!' Henry hissed, but soon realising Patrick was all he had left. Victor and Belch hadn't been around in quite sometime, but who could blame them? Henry was losing it.

'Look,' Patrick drawled, finally meeting Henry's eyes despite the height difference, 'I'm truly sorry, Henry. Do you think I like being called a 'Sociopath'? What about a 'Psychopath', huh?'

Henry shook his head no. Both boys were perplexed with these sudden diagnosis. Yet, so was Oscar Bowers and it caused him to outburst angrily at all possible opportunities. Henry wondered why he still hadn't run away from his old man, but despite all the times he hurts him, despite all the times he gets called derogatory names, Henry still remembers the times he'd been tucked up in bed by his father, or maybe that time his dad remembered his birthday and bought him a second hand bike.

With a moment of silence, both Henry and Patrick caught each others eye. Henry cracked a wry smile; 'We've only got one day left together before you move away, so why don't we stop arguing all the fucking time and actually do something?'

## 2

Despite the stabbing feeling in Patrick's chest, he gave a laugh of agreement. Last Wednesday, Patrick's parents had a serious discussion. There had been a lot of rowing, and Patrick wondered if it was to do with that terrible, looming 'D' word - Divorce. He'd felt terrible, awful. All night he had listened from his bed to the noise all the way below in the kitchen. They had been yelling all night, and Patrick couldn't sleep from the stress. Interrupt Patrick's daily rituals, and that's probably one of the only things that could get him to

become irate. Marching barefoot down those wooden stairs at 1 in the morning, Patrick had stopped and stared his parents full on in the eyes, his expression hard and unforgiving, his hair tousled. In his blue and white striped winter pyjamas, it didn't seem quite so threatening but giving his almost murderous expression and recent diagnosis as a Sociopath, Patrick's parents had become quite fearful of their loving son.

Josephine Hockstetter gasped, the tear tracks evident on her paled cheeks. Ronald Hockstetter flinched and clenched the tabletop for support.

Not one of the three said anything, but mixed emotions were very present at that moment in time. Fear, intimidation and angst were riddled throughout the atmosphere, and Josephine had had enough.

'That's it!' she had cried, 'We're moving! This place is tearing our family apart, we need to start afresh.'

The following day Ronald Hockstetter found a good office job application in a nearby New England state. Kingston, Vermont. Didn't it just sound grand? Not really for Patrick... He was perfectly happy in Derry, Maine. However, even Patrick had to admit moving to a new state would be kind of exciting. After all, Derry Elementary will hardly welcome him back with open arms in September after what happened with those Loser kids... Besides, Patrick figured he didn't have any true friends in this small town. Henry was cool. *Sometimes*. But Henry wasn't a friend to Patrick like how Belch was a friend to Victor, how Veronica was a friend of Greta Bowie or perhaps how Stan was a friend to Richie Tozier - and this bothered Patrick. Patrick could tell Henry preferred to be either in a group of three (Victor, Belch and himself) or entirely on his own because like on a clover, four may be lucky, but four's a crowd - and Patrick was that crumpled, lesser leaf that some cruel teenage boy would come along and pluck off just so that the clover wouldn't be a genetic freak of nature. He could see it bothered Vic and Belch whenever Henry let him hang around, but he didn't care so much about what they thought. Victor Criss and Reginald 'Belch' Huggins were nothing to him, merely another brick in the wall.

Patrick's mother spent most of her days trailing around estate agents,

looking for nice family homes in Kingston. She had taken time off her part-time job due to illness and spent the time she wasn't at the estate agent doting over Patrick at home. Josephine worried about him you see. She had no idea that her son could've been mentally ill before the recent events. Well, his report cards had always been rather lack-lustre, but she thought that was normal for any young boy. His doodles in his math revision books had always been a little... violent, but she also thought that was normal for any boy what with their odd fixations with war and bloodshed. Now, she reconsidered, and reconsidered again. Patrick never had any friends before. Well, apart from that Bowers boy recently in the past few months. Was Henry a bad influence on her boy? Maybe... He'd always seemed so polite whenever he went round for tea, so Josephine couldn't understand why Patrick would suddenly become so erratic. What she did understand, however, was that they needed to get out of Derry. It was for the best. Patrick would make new, *normal* friends, and they could maybe even get him the help he needs, if he needs it that is.

Soon enough, Josephine found the perfect home. It was small for an all-American home, but there were only three members of the Hockstetter family. The house was in a quiet neighbourhood not so far away from a little pine forest and to Josephine it looked like something out of a fairytale picture book that she'd read when she was a little girl. The garden was huge and lush. Perfect for planting vegetables and having summer tea parties with the women from the local Vermont Ladies club. She figured Patrick would like it too and planned to buy it. A week later, the house was vacant and she'd gone right ahead with Ronald's approval and bought it. Patrick of course didn't have a say in this matter; he was in disgrace.

Time had flown by with Henry and Patrick being banned from seeing each other (yet, did you really expect those boys to follow those rules?) and Patrick was moving the following day. His bags were packed, his wallpaper stripped and he wasn't that depressed about it, but somehow he found himself wishing Henry could go right along with them where he'd be safe from his horrible father and his disgusting girlfriend who could make awesome apple pies.

He'd told Henry that he'd miss him something awful, and Henry had simply smirked humorlessly and told him not to be so stupid, that

he'd make better friends than him and maybe even get a nice little girlfriend. Henry was jealous of Patrick's fresh new start in Vermont. He'd be forever stuck in Derry, Maine along with his deranged father and his falling-to-shambles farm. He'd grow old and bitter in this town, and eventually he'd die and be buried in Derry's Cemetery along with all the other small town deadbeats. However, he decided he'd be a good friend. That was what he always wanted to be if he couldn't be clever, or very handsome or charming. He'd be a good friend - and good friends would be happy for their friend to get a fresh chance in life and make things all better. That's what Henry decided he wanted to be then and there. In the past he had been cold and somewhat un-loyal to his pals Victor and Belch and now he decided he'd quite like to be as great to them as they'd been to him. Well... before Patrick came along. But where were Vic and Belch now? Henry hadn't seen them for some while now and was starting to get suspicious.

### 3

'Hey, I was thinking we should do a little something for the Losers before you go,' Henry chortled, his eyes shining with malice, 'It's the least we could do for getting us into this mess!'

Patrick guffawed in agreement, nodding his head vigorously. In the boys' opinion they hadn't done anything wrong. It was all the Losers' Club fault and they should be the ones that get punished! Rats deserve to be treated badly - break that unspoken rule and you were fresh bait, left for dead by all your closest friends.

'Yeah! That's great Henry!' Patrick beamed, his usually dead eyes alive with excitement. 'I really, really hope you kick their ass when I'm gone, Henry!'

'Don't you worry, baby,' Henry lied easily, his expression a lazy, almost sleazy smile, 'They'll wish they never fucking messed with us!' Together the boys were hanging out at Derry Harbour where they wouldn't be found quite so easily. It was where they'd first met up properly besides school, and Henry thought it was very sweet and fitting for it to be the place they'd say their final goodbyes. After they'd found the Losers and given them a good, old-fashioned beating that is. Secretly, Henry knew he didn't want anything to do with the

Losers anymore... He wanted a fresh start just like Patrick - and the only way he could do that was to avoid them point-blanc. Well, after today he would. He promised himself he'd straighten out and start preparing for his future like a real man. He was only fourteen, but it was never too soon to start growing up. He wasn't a ten year old any more and it wasn't like Oscar Bowers could make any sensible, logical decisions for his son. From tomorrow on wards, Henry would think about Patrick in the back of his parents car, probably stuffing his face with candy and giving himself butterflies thinking about all the stupid kids he'd make friends and enemies of in his new town. If Henry could do that, he just knew he'd be inspired to get his life back to normal, whatever that was.

As it was almost deserted at the harbour, Henry allowed Patrick to swing his arm around his waist just like they'd done at Sundae's. It felt comforting to have somebody that enjoyed touching him and wasn't afraid he'd freak-out and punch them or something silly like that. All of the pupils at Derry Elementary knew he didn't like to be cuddled and messed around with, and even his closest friends were reluctant to give him any kind of physical contact without warning him beforehand. Because he once kicked Eddie Corcoran in the shin for giving him a one-armed hug, everyone knew to leave him right alone, apart from Patrick Hockstetter obviously. He didn't quite fit into the normal social regime of things you see... Henry knew he'd miss Patrick's free hugs and how easy it was to allow Patrick to touch him. Who else would give him affection when Patrick was gone? Nobody - they were all too intimidated by him, another reason Henry wanted to turn his reputation around.

Swinging his arm around Patrick's broad shoulders, Henry pulled him closer to his body and directed him towards the barrens. Hopefully, the Losers would be there. Perhaps playing in their pathetic little underground clubhouse, maybe building a stupid little baby-dam. It didn't matter. What did matter was that they got their slither of revenge. Which, by the way, is never best served cold. That's just not satisfying enough. Henry would rather have immediate revenge than get revenge on somebody that can't even remember what they'd done to upset him and deserve their punishment.

Sure enough, there they were. Patrick admitted they were cute

together; especially that whore Beverly Marsh and big, blundering Ben Hanscome. He was only one year older than the Losers, but he still felt it gave him an advantage over them, especially with Henry around - he was fourteen! Hidden by the tall grass, both Henry and Patrick crouched down so that they were almost able to fully see the Losers. In between the blades of grass were the fiery shades of Beverly's hair that bobbed up and down every now and again. Henry guessed she was talking animatedly, nodding her head with enthusiasm. He could hear their silly, childish voices that had yet to deepen echoing all around them, bouncing off the steely drums and pipes of the nearby sewer system. Richie's voice was louder than usual and for some reason, he seemed to be talking in an Irish accent. Henry resisted the urge to giggle it was that ridiculous.

In Henry's satchel were a small collection of curiosities; four cherry bombs, ten firecrackers, two M-80s and five eggs. He didn't usually carry around a satchel, it's just he didn't want to be stopped by some nosy old hag. He was already well-known by the adults of Derry to be a troublemaker and if they were to see him with these items (especially lately) he'd most likely be stopped and taken to the police station. Henry didn't plan to kill the Losers any longer. Pennywise wasn't real. Some nice lady at the child psychiatry had told him that much... But why did Patrick see him too? Henry guessed that would always remain a mystery, although he did secretly think Patrick would agree with or do anything he said, even 'jump off a cliff or 'go kill yourself.'

There was a moment of silence from the Losers and even Trashmouth had stopped his jibber-jabber - Henry thought for one terrible second that somebody had caught sight of them perhaps, and soon they'd either fight or flight (or freeze if your name is Eddie Kaspbrak). In that moment of panic Henry threw his first cherry bomb, and it landed next to Beverly with such a loud bang that clouds of dust travelled through the air. All seven kids let out a shriek of surprise, some of them jumping so high that Patrick feared they'd land on him. Thankfully for the girl, it hadn't hit her. Henry's aim was way off. She'd sometimes hear of some poor, unfortunate kid that lost a finger or an eye playing around with cherry bombs, and recognised the noise right away. Her friends weren't too fast to react, Mike still sat on the ground, brown eyes wider than saucers.

'Get up!' She hollered, taking full command, 'It's Bowers! Get up now!'

'SHIT!' Cried the no-longer-Irish Richie Tozier, 'Shit, just leave us alone Bowers.'

'Y-yeah. Fuck. O-off,' Bill said forcefully, standing up to join his two friends.

'It's us six against you two loons,' Stan whispered distantly, placing a hand to his head where Patrick had shoved it underwater not so long ago. 'And you aren't even supposed to be together anymore.'

At that, Henry spluttered with laughter, throwing back his head and leaning against Patrick for support; 'Yeah? Yeah! Sure! Shit!' he giggled, tears dripping down his cheeks with a sudden case of hysterics, 'I don't fucking care, Uris.' Placing his arm back around Patrick's shoulders, he pulled him closer again - 'Just because you losers beat up Princess Patrick here... *doesn't* mean you can even think of messing with me - huh?'

Patrick gave him a quick eye-roll. His expression clearly stating he wasn't impressed with his new nickname.

'Enough tough talk bullshit from you, Henry,' Beverly hissed, seething that Henry had the nerve to show his face after letting his retarded friend drown Stan. 'If you won't leave us alone, I guess we'll just have to kick your ass again.'

'Go right ahead,' Henry replied smugly, 'You're just a stupid little girl.'

'Beverly's not stupid,' Ben yelled, wobbling over to where his friends were gathered opposite Henry and Patrick, 'And we're going to beat you. Again.'

After another bout of laughing, Henry's face straightened out. He was now completely serious and somewhat depressed. Before the Losers could even think about moving he had already thrown a firecracker in their direction.

Grass and bits of debris flew up into the Losers path, causing some to shield their faces and others to flee from the danger. The unlucky ones had their bare legs cut by shards of glass. Beverly landed not so

far away from Bowers, as agile as a big cat on her hands and knees, her green eyes just as furious as one too. Her legs were pale in the bright sunlight but with a shock of red where the glass had struck her - Fortunately, it could have been a whole lot worse. Plaits flying as she lunged at him, Henry found he was far too amused to move. Placing his hands in a joking 'get away from me!' gesture, he was surprised to feel Beverly's fist plunge into his jaw. With a dull crunch, he backed away slowly, eyes alarmed.

'I thought I told you creeps to stay away from us,' she grinned, obviously feeling elated at her sudden surge of power. Her friends stood around with their mouths wide open. Obviously they've seen their Beverly kick some ass before, but that was with Patrick Hockstetter - he was different! Henry Bowers was a whole different case. He was the kind that could beat up a high schooler boy without batting an eyelid.

Patrick stood there dumbfounded, but at the same time feeling very amused by the situation. Henry stared, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth - in a daze, he licked the blood from his chin. Giving Patrick a quick grin, he yelled, 'NOW!'

Tucked in the sleeve of Patrick's long shirt was another cherry bomb. He threw it through the air and it landed not so far away with a satisfactory '*bang!*'. Henry gave a boisterous cry of laughter and threw the two eggs in his hands, one of them splattering all over Bill Denbrough's head. 'Haha!' He cried, fumbling through his satchel and throwing another two. Patrick reached into his bag and grabbed a M-80 - he knew they were dangerous - he didn't care.

With the yolk dripping down his forehead, Bill Denbrough trembled. For a second it looked although he wanted to cry. He'd had a tough summer alright and that egg was just the icing on the cake. His parents ignored him, his brother Georgie had been dead two years, an evil clown was trying to kill them, and not only that - but now Henry Bowers was hot on his case again!

'T-th-throw o-one more t-th-th-thing and I'll k-kill y-you!' Bill yelled, tears now falling from his eyes. He didn't want to cry in front of his friends - he was the leader - but this time, oh this time, Bill had enough. 'I-I m-mean i-it, B-b-b-bowers! I want y-you t-t-to guh-get the

f-fuck o-out!' Pointing a shaky finger at Henry, Bill chuckled, tears still pooling in his eyes. Patrick watched emotionlessly, arms crossed across his chest. Henry smirked, his eyes smoldering with a certain kind of infuriating power that only people like himself could possess.

Henry had got what he wanted. He was satisfied. Did he really want to kill the Losers? Not really. Dr. Annie told him that deep, deep down he didn't really - and that it was just his sick brain playing nasty tricks on him. He agreed happily enough. What he really wanted to do, however, was to humiliate them for the amount of times they'd humiliated him. And more. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. He had made Bill Denbrough, leader of the Losers Club cry and that was good enough for him. At least for now whilst that Pansy Princess Patrick was still around.

'You know what? Fine,' Henry drawled, raising his palms skyward in self-defeat. 'I made you cry like a little baby and that's all I wanted for today. See you fuckers later!'

'Buh-bye, babies!' Patrick called after them, linking his arm back around Henry's waist and sticking out his tongue, 'This is sadly the last time I'll be seeing you cuties, so goodbye!'

Ignoring the jeered insults and hawked spit directed towards their retreating backs, Henry and Patrick wondered back to the direction they came from, lost in their own crazy little world.

#### 4

'So this really is the last time I'll see you?' Henry enquired, his face seeming depressed.

'Yeah...' murmured Patrick, casting his eyes away from Henry's, 'But mom said I could always write to you, and that sometimes, I could maybe even visit you. If you'd like.'

'Really?' Henry said doubtfully, cocking an eyebrow. Somehow he doubted Patrick's mother would let her son see him so easily again after what happened with Stanley Uris.

'Yeah,' said Patrick again, this time his eyes seeming shiny and red,

'Henry?'

'Hmm?'

'Promise me you'll always reply to my letters, even if they are lame and boring.'

Henry gently slapped his hands either side of Patrick's face, squishing both his cheeks. They were standing outside Patrick's home in his front garden, and Henry could feel his nosy next-door neighbour watching them with her steely, prejudiced eyes. 'You're real dumb, Patrick. Of course I'll write back to you!'

Patrick met Henry's eyes. 'Thank you...' he looked down at his sneakers, wishing once again that Henry could come with them to Vermont.

'Don't cry,' Henry instructed, 'It's faggy.' He let out a little chuckle as he felt himself trying his hardest not to shed a tear.

Henry knew then that Patrick was his best friend. Possibly the best he's ever had. He could share painful secrets without feeling bad, he could let Patrick embrace (and sometimes even kiss!) himself without feeling terrible, and, most of all, he trusted Patrick. Patrick was cool. Would there ever be another Patrick? Henry didn't think so. Wiping his nose on his jacket sleeve, Henry gave another weak laugh.

'We're being stupid aren't we?' Patrick laughed, imitating Henry's nose-wiping move.

'Mmm. We'll see each other at Christmas when you come to see your Grandma. I'll make sure of it,' smiled Henry, feeling his chest being crushed. 'And ...I'll write you every week. Even if nothing happens.'

Patrick's mother popped her head from around the porch door, dragging a suitcase far to heavy for her to carry; 'Patrick-baby? Henry? I'm sorry, but are you boys ready? We really need to hit the road.'

'Yes, Mrs Hockstetter,' Henry said without a smile, wanting to give Patrick's mother a higher opinion of himself, 'We've said goodbye.'

'Would you like a-'

Henry knew what she was going to say, but he felt he couldn't keep his emotions under check any longer, 'No thanks. I'll just walk. You seem very busy.'

Patrick hopped into the backseat after giving Henry a quick hug. He waved his hand sadly in Henry's direction - but Henry was already halfway down the road, willing himself not to cry. When he reached Bowers farm, he threw himself down on the porch and had a long crying session - the longest he'd ever had since his mom ran away when he was ten years old.

## 14. Chapter 14

1

### Henry

Henry hated to admit it, but he actually missed Patrick a lot. Deep down he knew that he missed the stupid boy a whole lot more than he would ever miss him - and that hurt. Patrick was probably riding down the motorway singing one of those annoying songs with his weird parents, already beginning to forget Henry used to be his only friend. That was one of the sad facts of life - Out of sight, out of mind. Friends come in and out of your life and you generally forget about a vast majority of them. When you've been through what Henry and Patrick or the Losers Club dealt with together, it would be hard to lose touch with one another, yet Henry knew it would be best to forget what happened with Patrick. He didn't want what was best though. He wanted wanted his old life back.

Sat in his overly-stuffy bedroom with both windows opened so wide that a grown man could fall out onto the patio and break his neck, Henry found he had nothing at all he felt like doing. Rena suggested he call Vic and Belch to see what they're up to, but Henry had lost interest in talking to other people lately. His dad not so gently suggested he get to work on the farm, yet Henry really didn't have the energy to work any longer. It was far too hot and he was far too upset about Patrick moving to Vermont. Summer school had ended for the term and Henry was almost downhearted about it. Now this really was a first! He no longer had the Losers club to chase after and his agenda was entirely booked up with appointments with that stupid Dr Annie who was convinced he was crazy. It was only halfway through the summer and Henry had nothing to do.

It had irked him somewhat that Annie told him everyday she saw him that Pennywise wasn't real. One day, he knew he'd end up showing her that switch-knife and cardboard box that Pennywise had gifted him with as clear evidence that Pennywise was actually alive. Yesterday he'd told her that Patrick was gone. Obviously she'd already known - Patrick was one of her other patients after all - but she wanted to get Henry's perspective on things. Apparently the boy

was really upset about Patrick leaving him. He always gave that same passive-aggressive smile and growled that he really didn't miss Patrick at all, yet Annie could see in his eyes that Henry was really hurt at his friend's departure. Whilst raving about how much he hated Patrick anyway, his dark eyes had a general melancholy that just wouldn't leave - Annie knew the boy was going through a tough time. One day in Dr Annie's office he had a sudden burst of anger at the mention of Patrick; flinging all the stationary and files off the desk with the sweep of an arm, Henry howled and wailed about how much he hopes Patrick would kill himself in his new town. He screamed about Patrick's mom and ranted on Patrick's dad, crying to the doctor about how mean they were to him by taking Patrick away. He paced about the room, babbling endlessly about his own father and all the terrible, abusive things he'd done to him. Henry hadn't been able to stop himself from sobbing - he had nobody left that understood, nobody that really liked him and who he liked back. Annie had been relatively cool about it... She hadn't had a bird like anybody else would have (Henry supposed that was the one thing he liked about Dr Annie). But that was yesterday... and Henry promised himself he wouldn't ever *humiliate* himself like that again.

Giving that box shoved far under his bed a wary side glance, Henry pulled on his jacket and set off downtown. On the bus he felt like everybody was staring at him, simply knowing that he was the one who was involved with Stanley Uris's little run-in with Death. Giving a five year-old boy a small glower, earning an equally as fierce glare from his mother, Henry turned his body flush to the window seat, ignoring everybody as best he could. It was bad enough going to 'Psychotherapy'. The scenery slowly changed from the cornfields and prairies of around Henry's and Mike's homes to the red brick Victorian buildings of downtown Derry. On the bus, Henry saw Mike seated at the back with his mom. They had got on together and Henry had given Mike a little snarl when he knew Mike's mother wasn't watching. Mike simply stuck his tongue out in reply. Unfortunately... his mother had seen that and gave Mike a little nudge with her elbow, telling him to be nice to others. Henry laughed. Now he felt just a little better.

When the bus eventually pulled into the nearest stop to Henry's clinic, he shot off the bus as fast as he could, trying his best not to

look at Mike Hanlon. He didn't want Mike to see him going to 'that crazy place' as his father referred to it as. As always, Henry's dad refused to go in with him, forever complaining that he didn't want no crazy son. Henry didn't care. In fact, it suited him rather well. Henry hated his father. Henry's father hated him. That seems to be a re-occurring theme according to Dr Annie. She once suggested a family therapy and the boy burst out laughing. As if his father would set foot in the building! He hardly even left his space in front of the wireless!

It was a beautiful sunny day with cloudy blue sky, completely opposite to how Henry was feeling. He knew that as soon as he flung himself down in Annie's office, the first question she would ask would be: 'How are you feeling, Henry?' Not even a simple 'hello' came first. It was always 'How's your mood been, Henry?' this and 'Have you been feeling good recently, Henry?' that. Henry knew he wouldn't be able to take it if Dr Annie mentioned the events of yesterday today. He already mulled over it all last night and most of this morning.

## 2

'Good afternoon!'

'Oh, hey...'

'It's beautiful weather we're having, hmm?' Surprise, surprise! Dr Annie gave him an actual greeting this time!

'Yeah.'

'Are you just being shy today, Henry?' Dr Annie giggled, knowing full well that Henry was the last person on earth to be shy. He just wasn't feeling too talkative today and that was fine. Last session he'd done a little too much talking - but that was in his own opinion it seemed - Annie didn't mind him crying and talking to her about what made him upset, just as long as he kept his anger under better control next time. That, they would work on.

'No. I just don't like you.'

Annie simply smiled and shook her head. Her kind eyes screaming at

Henry 'Aww, ain't that just cute!'. Together they were sat in her office; Henry sat on the spinnny office-worker chair, herself sat on a little kid's plastic one. Every so often he would give a little spin, his face completely serious despite doing something so goofy. Annie gave another little laugh.

'What?'

'Oh, you're just funny, Henry. Now, how have you been feeling lately?' That one question always makes Henry's blood boil.

Henry's face must have looked obviously confused, so the doctor said, 'That's okay. Take your time to answer, don't be pressured.' Lounging luxuriously on his chair, Henry simply stared at her, not bothering to answer her question or even think up an answer. 'Shall we try another question?' Annie eventually said, realising he wouldn't answer even if a gun was pointed to his head. He was just too stoic. No, not stoic, stubborn would be a far better word to describe Henry Bowers.

'Fine,' the boy huffed, blowing his new hairstyle out his eyes. He crossed and re-crossed his legs, obviously very uncomfortable whenever he went to this place. Annie could understand that feeling.

'Alright. Now, Henry. I know you felt very pent-up and angry yesterday. Is that right? Correct me if I'm wrong.'

'Yeah.'

'Okay then. Is that because of Patrick Hockstetter moving? You seemed to use the phrases and words 'I hope he kills himself', 'I hope he dies' and 'Patrick should die' quite a lot... Are those strong feelings really directed at Patrick? Or maybe, you are angry at Patrick's parents for taking him away?'

'Yeah.'

'Henry, answer me properly please. This could help you, you know.'

Henry let out a moan of exasperation, 'Fine. I don't really hate Patrick. I just miss him and I miss Vic and Belch too. It's the summer and I'm bored. That a good enough answer for you?'

'Excellent answer, Henry. Good boy! You see, it helps to get your feelings straightened out and talk about them, doesn't it? I know you have trouble controlling your anger. Keeping things bottled up inside can lead to big outbursts, like yesterday. That's what I want you and your daddy to work on. If you can just-'

'No, Annie. I don't want my father here! He doesn't give a fucking damn about me and he doesn't want to be around crazies,' Henry burst out, violently spinning on his chair. His engineer boot kicked the table leg as he went, causing more papers to fly. Annie hoped it wouldn't turn into another tantrum like yesterdays.

'Henry... It may seem to you like your dad doesn't care, but really he-' Annie stopped, seeing Henry's face fall. Obviously she should try to keep on topic instead of be lead astray and cause him to feel hurtful. 'Never mind. I'll tackle that later,' she said, half to herself, half to Henry. 'Back to Patrick! Don't get mad, but your school wanted to know more about your relationship.'

Henry froze.

'Oh, don't worry! We only want to get to know you better. This is talking therapy as you know. We do it with all our patients. As Patrick is sadly no longer in our care, we only have your perspective on things, Henry. Just so you know, we're only asking this basic question so we know exactly what happened on that day with Master Uris. It will just help our understanding, see? Also... I know you're having some troubles at the moment with Master Hockstetter what with his leaving. Obviously it's upset you... So, feel free to say what you wish. Everything is confidential between us.'

Heart palpitating, Henry wondered if he should make up a lie. He couldn't tell Dr Annie about those times Patrick and himself had kissed and done things that a typical boyfriend and girlfriend would do. It would repulse her! Sure, her job was to listen to all kinds of people talk about what weird, wonderful, wild and downright terrible things they've done, but Henry found himself grow stressed at the thought of telling her about how close he'd been with Patrick. He only really liked Annie left in this world. Victor and Belch weren't around anymore. The last time he'd seen them was when he'd gotten drunk with them almost three weeks ago. His father was his least

favourite person on the planet. All he ever did was torment and beat him. Henry knew that if he made Annie hate him by telling her about Patrick, then his life was next to over. Literally everything gravitated around Annie nowadays. You want to go to the corner shop, Henry? Too bad. You've got another daily appointment with Dr Annie - she wants to talk to you about the importance of telling an adult when you feel the situation gets out of control. Want to go back to school in September, Henry? Junior high starts soon - only a few weeks to go and your summer is over. Well, that's a shame because Dr Annie doesn't want you to go back to school yet. Not until they've got your treatment, medication and paperwork handled properly. Apparently you're just too sick...

Henry didn't even feel sick like the doctors were continually telling him he was. He wondered, if he was that sick, then why didn't they just lock him in a mental hospital and be done with it? They gave him pills - anti-psychotics they were called - but whenever he went home with them his father would throw them away with the rest of the garbage, telling him he didn't need them and they'd just make his stomach hurt.

'Henry?'

'What?'

'I asked you a question. Were you listening?'

'Um, yes. Patrick was my friend.'

'That all you wanted to say? I may be a doctor but I'm certainly no mind-reader. Tell me everything that's going on, sweetheart.'

'...Fine,' and in that moment, Henry trusted Annie to be kind and understanding like she'd always ever been. He told her of everything. Everything from the events at the dump back in July to that time when they'd gotten drunk together and ended up kissing. She *had* told him he could tell her anything in confidentiality. If that was just a lie Henry knew he would explode.

'I see,' Annie still wore that official smile of hers. It frightened Henry somewhat. After that she said nothing more. That's what frightened

Henry most of all. Surely she wouldn't hate him... for that?

'You're mad with me. I can tell.'

Annie truly looked surprised, 'No, Henry. Why would I be mad with you? You told me about you and Patrick and I'm proud! I'm impressed you're really opening up to me, so well done you!"

Now it was Henry's turn to be puzzled; hadn't he literally told her he was a homosexual in three minutes or less? She should be angry with him. Angry that he was gay, angry that he was doing things with boys when he was at such a young age. Didn't she care that what he did was plain dirty and 'wrong' by society's standards? 'Then you must be real dumb.'

'I'm not dumb, Henry,' Annie simpered and Henry felt ridiculous himself, looking around at all her certificates and merits on the wall, 'I'm just really happy you feel you can tell me anything. Most other patients aren't as clear and as open as you. Not only that, but you're also such a good listener. Why do you have such a low opinion of yourself? Hmm? I think you're a lovely boy when you want to be, but when you're upset about something, you get overly worked up and angry. That's all and we'll deal with it just like we're dealing with your illness. Through talking.'

Henry shrugged. He was actually feeling kind of pleased with himself.

Dr Annie saw the corners of his mouth were twitching and continued; 'I swear, I think we'll get your treatment fixed within the next few weeks and then we can get you back to school in September. You'll see your friends and feel less lonely then.' Henry was certain that by the last sentence there was a hidden meaning of 'and then you'll finally get over that Hockstetter kid'. He wasn't sure he liked it but thank goodness this therapy session was almost over! Over on the wall was a clock that read 3:30 pm - he had been there a little before 2 so that meant this lecture was finished. Annie quickly changed the subject to Elvis Presley (who she knew Henry idolised) before pointing out the time to him. Henry was simply glad it was done with when he caught the bus back home.

## **Patrick**

Despite being furious with his parents for taking him away from his seemingly only friend, Patrick was actually quite glad to be away from Derry. He knew if he stayed there it wouldn't be long before the police find his secret fridge - it was starting to get unbearably rancid-smelling and he found he could smell it before he even waltzed through the dumps gates. Obviously he forgot how he'd told Dr Annie about the old Amana not long before he left. Not only that, but he was starting to get abuse not only from Henry's older high school friends, but also from members of Derry Elementary. He was used to that of course - but began to grow wary as even people he didn't know would taunt him for being both gay and mentally ill. Passing a young man in the streets whilst doing the weekly shop for his mother, Patrick would more than often hear the slur 'fag' directed at him from across the road. Giving said young man a icy, disgusted glare and sticking his middle finger up in his face, Patrick would continue on his way. Soon, Patrick grew to hate Derry and was glad to be away from it all. Kingston, Vermont was a lovely town not quite so different-looking than Derry, Maine. The Hockstetter's new home was even better than expected yet Patrick missed his old bedroom and his garden where he used to play with Avery, before he died. The new garden was beautifully cared for and Josephine promised Patrick that he and his new friends could play in it together. Patrick had no new friends. He wasn't interested in having new friends (or any friends at all for that matter). Instead, he spent the rest of his summer watching the wildlife in the pine forest alone, digging small holes in the forest floor and hanging out near the nearest corner shop, drinking Coke and swinging on the swing sets despite the weather being so rainy. His mother worried about him spending so much time alone - and just what was he doing by digging those holes?! - that was weird behaviour for a teen boy.

One rainy September morning when Patrick was at Junior High, Josephine left the house to see what Patrick had been doing in the forest for the remainder of his summer holiday. She knew he was lonely without that Bowers boy he was so seemingly infatuated with. She knew that for most of Patrick's life he had no interest of being with other children. He was a loner - and that was fine by her as long as he was happy that way. Patrick hadn't really made any new friends

in his new school but had told her he prefers it that way. Josephine often worried about him during the days where he was at school. She hoped that he would settle in soon. Somewhat, she knew it was hopeless.

With the rain seeping through the branches of the trees, the sky painted a dull white-grey, Josephine tackled the forest paths, already getting lost despite being so close to home. The forest would typically smell beautiful on a rainy day, but something not-so-nice was making Josephine's nose scrunch up with distaste. From behind was a crack of a branch snapping underfoot. The woman whipped around and her jaw dropped. 'Patrick?! What are you doing here? You're supposed to be at school!'

Patrick's eyes fell dark, his whole face twisted with anger and what looked like hate; 'Mom. Why are you checking up on me all the time? This is my place to be, so don't go here any longer.'

Josephine's chest felt tight whenever he looked at her that way, which seemed to be a lot lately since they moved state. 'I'm... I'm worried about you, Patty! But why are you here at this time? School doesn't end for another five hours... Your father will get mad if he finds out you've been bunking off. He payed an awful lot for that school, sweetie.'

'I hate that school, mom. I'm not going again,' Patrick said, his face devoid of any emotion. The wind was cold and bitter, causing Josephine to huddle closer to her son. There was that terrible smell again... It seemed stronger around Patrick. Strange.

'Patrick, I know you're upset but would you like to continue this conversation inside the house? It's getting awful chilly out here. I'll make you a nice cup of cocoa and we can talk this through like adu-'

Josephine's heart was in her mouth. *Was that blood on my son's face?* Concealed by a few strands of fringe was a drying patch of blood. And again... what was that smell?!

'What?' Patrick asked, his innocent tone masking his general newfound hatred for his mother.

'Have you been in a fight?'

Patrick looked confused, 'No... Why?'

'Your face - look, there's blood on it,' Josephine said, licking her fingers and rubbing at the boy's forehead. 'Where's this even come from? Look, it's really cold. We should go back inside before...' The woman hesitated, spotting one of those holes that was actually the reason she came into the forest in the first place. A little tuft of something furry was poking from out the mound of earth, causing Josephine to shriek in shock. Creeping closer, her eyes widened to the sight of a decomposing white rabbit. Its face was a bloodied mask of pain. Long dead. 'Patrick!'

Patrick stood with his legs parted, his expression hard and unfeeling. He had his back to the family home and Josephine felt threatened knowing she had no getaway. But wasn't that being ridiculous? Patrick was her *son*. He wouldn't do anything to hurt her, would he?

'Patrick, what is this?' Josephine asked, tears springing to her eyes, her tone shuddery and weak.

Patrick sighed. He loved his mother, but her constant asking of questions was growing tiresome. 'Mom.... I'm sorry. I just can't seem to stop.. Killing things.'

Josephine broke down in tears. Her body slumped to the floor where Patrick uselessly watched her wail. 'Patrick! I thought you got over this... this bad habit! Dr Annie said you'd stopped!'

'What?! You knew about my fridge?! Annie said whatever I told her wouldn't be repeated to my parents!'

'Well, Patrick. Sometimes people lie and you just have to fucking get used to it!' she hissed, motherly facade breaking down in her sadness and disappointment. Patrick was very surprised that she cursed and felt the tiniest amount of remorse. He thought he'd be able to stop too once he moved to Vermont but all through the summer he found himself digging shallow graves for small animals. To Patrick, it just didn't give him that same rushing thrill of the Amana but it still preoccupied his sick mind with a brief flash of joy. That pleasure was

all he wanted; all he needed. Patrick didn't need friends. He didn't need his parents. He didn't need Henry and heck! He certainly didn't need that mindless psychotherapist!

'Mom, don't get so angry with me. I'm sorry.'

'No... I need to talk with your father. We need to get another doctor for you before this gets out of hand.'

'Mom! It won't get out of hand! They're only stupid little animals! Look, they're mindless and don't feel any pain. Look!' Patrick quickly scooped a little field mouse into his hands and squeezed it as hard he could. The poor little mouse's eyes bulged momentarily before going black, dull and lifeless. His mother let out some muffled squawks of despair, burying her face into her lacy handkerchief. *How could our Patrick have turned out so wrong? He's not like myself or his father at all!*

'Stop it Patrick! Please stop! I won't make you go back to that school so just stop! Come back in the house, I don't want you to be alone like this anymore... It's not good for you,' Josephine cried, attempting to pry the dead rodent from his fingers. Patrick dropped it to the ground with a dull thud, his face still completely expressionless. His mother almost thought he was going to obey, but then... 'No.'

'Excuse me?'

'I said no! You're just going to make me go to the fucking doctors! They'll take me away and you and daddy won't love me anymore!' Patrick tore off into the forest, his legs going almost too fast for his body and working on adrenaline alone; not caring as branches tore holes in his school clothes and scratching his pallid face, Patrick ran as far away from home as he could get without stopping. Finally, he quit running to catch his breath. His mother had slowly dawdled after him, still snivelling her eyes out and walking at a snails pace.

'Go away!'

'Patrick, come home...'

'No!'

'I'm calling your father! He'll be mad that he has to come home from

work and get you!' Josephine knew that was an empty threat.

Surprisingly, Patrick stared at her blankly, his body going completely frigid. 'Fine... I'll come home, but please don't call dad. He wouldn't ever understand me like you do, mom.' These words both charmed and frightened Mrs Hockstetter at the same time. She wanted to be a good mother and that was what she wanted ever since she was a little girl playing with baby dolls.

'C-come here.' Patrick's mother held out her arms for a hug and in that moment, Patrick just didn't feel like he could bring himself to do it.

'I won't ever forgive you if you get another doctor for me.' He hesitated, 'And I'll always hate you. Always.'

'F-fine... I won't tell anyone about these animals, just promise me it won't ever get out of hand. Promise me... you won't ever hurt a *human*.'

'Like Stan?'

'Yes, like Stan. Yes, like anybody! Don't you see how much trouble you'll get into, Patrick! If you had killed that poor boy then you'll have gone straight to an asylum. I won't ever see you again. Is that what you want?' her voice was now going shrilly, 'Now promise me.'

'I promise.' Patrick had his fingers crossed behind his back.

'Thank you... Now, lets go home. I'll make some hot cocoa and pop tarts and you can watch TV for the rest of the day. No more school for Patrick, I guess.' Josephine dried her reddening eyes and smiled weakly, taking her son's hand in her own. She knew he was too old for that but didn't care. Patrick returned her smile and let her lead him home, simply pleased that he wouldn't have to go to Kingston Private Junior High anymore.

## Henry

His father was waiting for him with a sickly, disturbing smile when he

walked through the screen door. Henry almost wanted to yell at him but knew it would be best for his own safety to turn the other cheek and just go to his room. Unfortunately his father stopped in front of him before he could escape.

'What now, daddy?'

His dad said nothing.

'Get outta my way!'

'That kid's gone, hasn't he?'

'What 'kid'? Make sense, dad,' Henry growled agitatedly. He didn't have time for this... Something had been playing on his mind ever since he set foot in Dr Annie's office.

'Patrick Hockstetter,' his father drawled, testing the word luxuriously on his tongue. Obviously he'd been drinking again... 'And good thing he left too! The fucking kid was clogging up my house being here all the time. I don't like you having friends round unless you're working together on the farm, you see. Now why don't you call up Victor n' that Reginald kid and get them to help out? *Reginald...*' he scoffed, 'What a pansy name!'

Henry narrowed his eyes - he hadn't come all the way home just to hear his dad insult his closest friends. 'Shut up, dad. I'm going to my room.' Before his father could lash out, Henry had already slammed his bedroom door and flopped himself down on the ratty carpet. Again, there was that cardboard box tormenting him by its unknown contents. It was like an itch he just couldn't scratch. Still, the greasy paper reeked of something disgusting - Henry wondered if it was Patrick playing a final trick on him by putting one of his dead animals in a matchbox-sized carton.

Finally working up the courage to open the brown wrapping paper, Henry slid his switchblade under the first piece of cello-tape. It broke off with a satisfying tearing noise. Next, he attacked the other side. The parcel slowly began to unravel in his hands and Henry marvelled at how nauseating it was beginning to smell. He briefly contemplated whether he was doing the right thing. Pennywise told him only to

open it when the Losers were dead... But Pennywise wasn't real... was he? Henry didn't know what to believe. Annie wouldn't lie would she? Not to him. Henry refused to believe Dr Annie was a liar. She seemed to be the only one that cared about him recently and Henry could feel himself wanting to be on his best behaviour for the woman. She always rewarded him with chocolate whenever he told her of something good he'd done at school or at home.

Shaking his head as he was getting distracted by thoughts of Annie, Henry got back to focusing on the real world. In his shaking hands was something smelly and leaking. Wait.. It had been perfectly dry a minute ago... Henry screamed. Now writhing in his hands was something mildly reassembling a spider. Its mangled body was torn and bloodied, and was only about the size of Henry's palm. He'd seen bigger spiders in the garden - but there was something horrifying about this one. Not only that, but it had five legs in total. One of them must have been ripped off some way or another. Blood seeped down his arms and dripped onto the flooring, causing Henry to blink in surprise and revulsion. He dropped the spider like a hot potato and sprinted across the room, his eyes wide with fear. Throwing a nearby book at the spider to kill it only seemed to agitate it more. To Henry's horror, the spider scuttled away elsewhere, probably to make itself comfortable in his bed sheets. Henry shuddered violently. There was more. Still saturated in blood of unknown sources, the once brown paper held a little note:

"Dear Henry Bowers,

If you're reading this, I would like you to know that I'm about to go into my thirty year period of hibernation. The Losers club are dead and this makes me very happy. Very happy indeed! Also that I'll no longer be requiring your services. Thank you for all your help, bucko! Just kidding! Now, if I find out you've read this earlier than planned, and the Losers Club aren't actually dead, I'm afraid I'll have to kill you, Henry. I'll kill you and all your friends. I know everything about everything and everyone - so I'll know you've been a cheat right away, young man. You'll float with us, Henry. Isn't that what you'd like? It must be, because I know you haven't actually taken care of the Losers. They're still alive and I'm coming for you now, Henry. I'm going to kill you and your stupid friends, Henry. I'm coming right

now, Henry. I've already taken care of the pansy boy. Better hide because I'm going to kill you! Boo! Love Pennywise the Dancing Clown :) xoxoxo"

Henry's face slowly went from a smile to a horrified grimace in the time it took him to read the note. He cupped his face in a sudden hysteria, his whole mindset turning from disgust from earlier to absolute terror. His nails dug into his face and tears fell from his eyes as he spun on the spot, wondering what on earth he should do. An apprehension grew in his chest, making Henry just know what Pennywise had written was a promise, not just an empty threat. The way the note had gone from congratulating him to taunting him in mere seconds frightened the boy more than he could say. Had Pennywise known from the start that he wouldn't be able to carry out his task?! And what did it mean by 'I've already taken care of the pansy boy.'? A lump formed in Henry's throat. *It means Patrick's already dead, stupid!*

Henry laughed. *I wanted Patrick dead and now look! Patrick has actually died! All those times he told me he couldn't die otherwise everybody else would die right along with him... Then why aren't I dead, Hockstetter?! Why haven't I just dropped dead?!*

Henry cried; the tears dripping down his cheeks in two steady tracks. The curtains fluttered in a sudden breeze, alerting Henry that Pennywise could be at his door any minute, just waiting to kill him and eat him up. He knew what he had to do - yet at the same time he had to admit it was cowardly and over-the-top. He couldn't just wait for Pennywise to show up and kill him. He wouldn't give him that satisfaction; and at the same time, it would be like dying for the Losers club - after all they did for him, all the misery they put him through! Henry laughed again. This time his voice sounded empty and hollow in the small bedroom.

## Patrick

'I'm home!' Came the familiar voice of Ronald Hockstetter from the hallway, causing Patrick to look up from the picture he was drawing, his eyes wide with a sudden bout of anxiety. Crayon clenched in

hand, Patrick vowed to himself that he would run away if things got nasty. They never did of course (Ronald would never beat on his son and wife unlike Henry Bowers' father) but Patrick still knew he had to be wary over what his mom told his dad. He wanted control, you see. Patrick loved domination over people. That was the reason he often pulled on a girl's hair during class - to let her know just who was in charge - Patrick Hockstetter, of course! Patrick loved power...

'Hey, honey! Welcome back. I've got dinner on the table just like you wanted!' Josephine called out to him from the kitchen.

'That's great. Thank you, dear!' Ronald beamed, loosening his tie and swinging it over the banister. Patrick imitated him with overly extreme hand gestures, making his voice all high-pitched and waverer-y. He grew to hate his dad most of all. He was the one that forced him to go to a private school that had lessons even on a Sunday! Ronald Hockstetter was the one that suggested he go to counselling every fortnight! 'Oh, hey Patty. How are you?'

Patrick glared, letting him know everything wasn't rosy in the world of Patrick Hockstetter. Quickly his mother came into the dining room where Patrick was sat drawing. An easy diversion. She pecked Ronald on the mouth and hugged him, mouthing at Patrick from behind his back to 'act like nothing happened!'

'Hello, daddy. How was work?' Patrick smiled sweetly, remembering that he made a deal with his mother not to tell him of the incident with the forest animals. Ronald cocked his head in surprise ('Why, the boy never asks me how work is! What's going on?') before amusedly telling him work was great. Patrick replied that he was very pleased.

Throw anybody else in the situation and ask them about the Hockstetter family - they would immediately tell you they're the sweetest, most loving family around. I can tell you right out that this is a lie. Out of the three remaining members (one had already died as an infant and one more will die only four years later) of the family, they all have their own horrible secrets. To say they are white lies would be downscaling the problem terribly. Patrick's father knew who killed Avery Hockstetter. He wouldn't voice the problem even if you payed him a million dollars. Patrick's mother knew about her

son's relapse into a killing spree. She wouldn't tell her husband if you pointed a gun at her head and yelled at her to spit out the truth. Patrick had been lying about where he was ever since the second day of Junior High began. Ever since that day he spent his 'school time' killing animals in the little space of forest next to his house. They should have known really... He always came home covered in the dirt from catching rabbits. Instead of being open and honest like a loving family would be, they all kept their worries inside to fester away at their psyches.

All three ate dinner together in silence, each milling over their individual problems and ailments. Josephine broke it before (once again) telling both her husband and son how great it was in their new town. Apparently you can get toilet rolls from the corner shop almost a dollar cheaper than in Derry! Wow! Patrick really didn't care. In fact, he cared so little that he interrupted Josephine's speech on the importance of good quality toilet rolls to show them both his latest drawing. Both parents stared. Ronald still had his fork hovering over his mouth, spaghetti curled around the fork and tomato sauce smeared on his chin.

'Sweetie, that's...' Josephine didn't really have any words to describe it, it was just so disturbing.

Ronald Hockstetter was as equally lost for words but still managed to gasp out; 'Son, who's this boy?'

'This is Henry, dad. This is Henry's house.'

'What's going on, Patrick? Why are you acting this way?!' his mother yelled, tears sparkling in her eyes for the second time today. 'You can't just do things like that and not expect us to worry!'

'What's wrong with it mom?'

What *isn't* wrong with it would be a better question yet. In Patrick's left-handed, child-like scribbles was a boy with greaser hair, greaser leather jackets and greaser engineer boots. He was hanging from the ceiling, his red crayon mouth still smiling despite being hung from a noose. His feet just brushed the floor. His house was on fire. There was a man dead on the floor. Patrick's mother almost thought it was

Patrick's way of telling them he wanted to die before realising it wasn't actually Patrick at all; it was that awful Henry Bowers, always making her son's life hell!

Josephine rushed from the room crying. This left Patrick and his father to stare uneasily at one another.

'Patrick. We really need to talk. I don't think I want you going to school tomorrow - or the next day for that matter. We need to get things straightened out.'

Patrick discreetly clenched his fist in happiness under the table. This was excellent! He still said nothing and kept his cold eyes trained on his worried-sick father.

'We need to get you another doctor.'

Patrick's face fell. His plan hadn't quite worked out but at least he didn't have to go to school anymore.

'I love you son... but I just don't think I can deal with these... this behaviour any longer. It upsets me and it upsets your mother. All we ever want is for you to be happy but when you draw things like this...' His father couldn't say any more and found himself crying in front of his son. The poor man still thought the boy in the picture reassembled Patrick in some odd alter-ego way and he just wasn't sharing the truth for fear of hurting them. Little did he know that the boy really *was* Henry Bowers and Patrick was simply drawing a dream he had last night.

'I'm sorry, dad. I love you too,' Patrick half-heard himself saying. His father stood up from the dinner table and wrapped Patrick in a bear hug. Patrick didn't like it at all. He hated it as much as he hated Junior High. He half thought of stabbing his father there and then when he had open access to his back. That sudden thought disgusted him as soon as it was voiced by the chemicals playing havoc with his brain. How could he hurt his father who loved him so dearly? Patrick burst into tears (crocodile ones) and rested his head against his dad's chest, telling him how sad his new school made him feel. Patrick's dad cried and held him, promising him that he'd never make him go back there if that's how bad it made him feel. After they had finished,

Ronald went to go find his wife who was sitting quietly in the garden, snivelling to herself - and Patrick, mighty pleased with himself, went to his room grinning like a Cheshire cat, very happy that he fooled both his mom and his dad in one day just so he could get out of school! He played with his collection of dead beetles a while, making some of them talk to him in weird, bubbling voices, and lounged around on his bed thinking about his Amana back in Derry. Something in the back of his mind told him that the police had finally found it along with the nearby bush chock-a-block with corpses. He didn't particularly care to be honest. As long as he had his new method of killing, then it was just fine by him if the police found his old death-bottle. Surely they wouldn't know it was him? Unless of course, Henry Bowers ratted him out... Patrick knew he wouldn't do that. Smiling, Patrick remembered the way he had Henry wrapped around his little finger the whole time. He wondered if he'd ever find somebody else so hard to manipulate and control as Henry Bowers. Everybody else was an easy toy to Patrick. A way to get pleasure. A way to get exactly what he wanted by twisting and charming his way into getting them to either love or hate him. That was what Patrick looked for in a person.

Later, Patrick's mother came into his room whilst he was dozing with his head pressed against the foot of the bed. She laughed uneasily as he looked although he'd just fallen from a plane wreck. Patrick shot up at the sound of her voice, his eyes only just adjusting to the semi-darkness of his bedroom.

'Look, Patrick,' she whispered gently, sitting down next to him on his bed, 'I'm sorry if I caused you to feel upset or ashamed earlier. I suppose you can't help what you feel inside. Your father and I have discussed... and we think it would be best if we took you to the doctors tomorrow.'

'So no school?'

'No school.'

'For how long?'

'As long as it takes to get you better,' she answered in her matter-of-fact manner.

'That's cool,' Patrick said, relaxing on his pillows and closing his eyes. 'Thank you mom.'

His mother was about to leave when she paused at the door. Patrick opened his eyes. 'Can I just ask you one question?'

'Sure.'

'That boy wasn't you was it?'

'No mom! I told you already - that boy is Henry Bowers!'

'But why is he... dead like that? Why did you draw him killing himself? Why would you do that, Patrick? Surely that's an evil, horrible thing to do, drawing somebody you love like that.'

'Well...' Patrick paused, looking down at his duvet and studying the pattern, 'It was a dream I had last night, that's all. It doesn't mean anything. Swear to god!'

In the dark, Josephine could tell Patrick was grinning. 'Well, if that's all it is... Then I guess I'm not as worried as I was before. But hey, why don't you go back to drawing that sweet girl next door like you used to! Stephanie was she called? You know, the girl with the Great Dane.'

'Susie,' laughed Patrick, suddenly realising everything was cool with his mom.

'Yes, her. She was such a pretty girl. Lovely personality too. You drew her lots because she was your girlfriend, wasn't she?!' Josephine teased, loving how easily Patrick got embarrassed.

'Mom!' Patrick whined.

'Alright, alright! She was just the girl next door! Goodnight, Patty.'

'Night, mom,' Patrick smiled, relaxing knowing he had no school the next day. Whilst drifting off to sleep, Patrick's mind briefly wondered back to Henry Bowers, wanting to know how he was getting on all the way back in Maine.

## Henry

Awaking in a mixed state of pain and confusion, Henry flipped out as he had no idea where he was. He was laying in bed, but this wasn't his bed and these certainly weren't his bed sheets. They were far too thin, starchy and static-y to be his own. Whenever he kicked and fussed with the sheets, they gave him dull electric shocks and ripples of static. He felt ensnared in his blankets and instead pushed them to the ground. When he stood up in the almost pitch-black room, he found he was wearing these blue and white striped pyjamas which he had no memory of owning before. They were comfy and smelt clean, so Henry guessed he was at least grateful for that - but he still had no idea where he was! The curtains were open from the window next to his bed and Henry could see the fluorescent neon lights showing signs for Elderberry Hospital. He had no idea why he was in hospital. Perhaps his father had finally tried to kill him? That wouldn't surprise the boy. Seemingly, he was the only patient in the ward, so he had nobody to ask why he was here. No night nurses strolled past for the next ten minutes and Henry could feel himself panicking, wondering what was broken. A drip was attached from the ceiling to the back of his hand and every few seconds would come some irritating beeping, booping noise. *How do I turn this stupid thing off??!*

'Oh Henry! You're awake!' Came a stranger's voice from the white-washed corridor. A woman stood in the doorway and flicked the light switch to on, dazzling Henry who had been sat in the dark for the past fifteen minutes. She was young, possibly in her early twenties and had a kind smile. Thank goodness for a friendly face; Henry didn't know what he'd do if it was Pennywise that had spoken. Henry wasn't sure how to react to the woman and instead, glowered at her in return.

'How are you feeling, honey?' Again, that stupid question.

'Great,' Henry shot back sarcastically, his expression flat. The nurse came to sit on the foot of his bed, seemingly blocking out the noise of the drip. She rearranged his cushions much to Henry's embarrassment and asked him if he wanted anything to eat or drink. Still, this didn't answer any of Henry's questions so he refused to answer any of hers.

'Henry, please don't be difficult. We're trying to help you, sweetheart.'

Henry was sick of all the mollycoddling he seemed to be getting an awful lot of recently. He couldn't understand why everybody was being so kind to him when he'd done such horrible things. Instead, he leaned his head back against the pillows and asked for the time. She replied that it was almost midnight. Henry let out a sigh as he realised how tired he really was. He felt a shooting pain in his neck - probably from where his father attempted to strangle him, Henry thought. A little tag on the nurse's pink uniform said the name 'Jennifer' so the boy at least knew her name.

'Jennifer,' he whined, wrapping his hands around his tender throat  
'My neck hurts....'

Jennifer gave him a sympathetic smile, 'I know, sweetie. It will hurt for quite a bit but we've got painkillers to help with that. For now you just stay in here until you're feeling more like yourself.' She gave his hair a ruffle which caused him to shrink back in disgust.

'What happened? I can't remember why I'm in here, Jennifer. What did dad do to me?'

'Well...' Jennifer hesitated, wondering if it were her place to say such things, especially to a child, 'You... you attempted to hang yourself earlier today... Your house was set on fire and the police are investigating the scene for foul-play but... Your father, he didn't survive. I'm really sorry. He suffered stab wounds to the neck and died a couple of hours ago in the next adult's hospital, fighting for his life.'

Henry couldn't remember ever trying to kill himself. He certainly couldn't remember setting his house ablaze and who killed his dad?! Sat there in the empty ward, Henry felt lonelier than he ever had before. There was a numb silence between the two before... 'Oh.'

'I'm sorry,' the woman wished she could hug the boy, but feared it would be deemed 'inappropriate' by the authorities, 'Is there anything you need, Henry?'

'I just want to sleep.'

'Well, alright then. Just ask the front desk if you need me for anything. I'll be there as soon as I can. Goodnight, Henry. I may be back in the night to change your drip and medication.'

With that, the young woman left Henry to fall straight asleep. His dreams were a confused tangle of meaningless imagery; a switchblade, some length of rope, his dad's lighter and the barn. At one point, the boy woke up in a cold sweat after having a vivid dream he was on fire. He half thought of calling for Jennifer but soon realised she would think he was ridiculous for calling her all that way just to be comforted from a nightmare. Instead, he sat up in bed and listened to the birds sing outside. The clock read almost 5am. He still had a lot of time to kill and knew he wouldn't be sleeping anytime soon. Despite feeling although he'd just been haunted by a ghost, Henry had to stop himself from slipping back into a slumber. His eyelids felt heavier than lead and his limbs were going numb. At one point, he felt himself drop back off to sleep despite how much his neck was hurting - it was just so quiet and so dark. The darkness in the hospital was almost comforting unlike the darkness from the streets or the darkness at home. It felt almost although it was enveloping him with a warm, soft feeling - Henry was glad his father was no longer alive. Henry was glad he had a bed all to himself.

A sharp realisation woke him from his nap; *somebody is going to die*. Henry grew panicky. *Somebody is dying. I can't stop it all the way in this children's hospital...* Deep down, he knew who was going to die - Victor Criss and Belch Huggins - His dreams had been haunted by them for about a week... Before his father died, Henry couldn't stop himself from dreaming about him - and guess what? Henry killed him. He actually took his switchblade and dug it deep into his father's neck. Henry was a murderer and he was being treated like a prince in this weird children's hospital far away from home! A prickly feeling formed in Henry's stomach. It was like he wanted to be sick from all the guilt and anxiety he was feeling. Rushing to the bathroom, Henry flung himself down in front of the toilet seat without even turning on the light. In the darkness, clown faces jeered and laughed at him, making puking noises and baring their sharp teeth. The white outlines of the cross eyes ran like ink on a rainy day, causing their faces to appear like they were almost bleeding. Blood dripped onto the floor that only Henry could see as he heaved. Behind him, a light

switch slowly flickered on. Turning around sheepishly and wiping his mouth, Henry saw Jennifer standing in the doorway. Only, this wasn't Jennifer's face. It was his father's.

## 15. Chapter 15

1

"Dear Henry,

My mom said that if I miss you so badly I should probably send you a letter. I'm not very good at writing or spelling, so just bair with. I hope you'll like to read it anyway. I would ask mom to spell chek it but that would be embarasing. She's already so disappointed in me anyways.. I wanted to ask, how are you? I miss you so much and it's very boring without you.

Well, I guess I should tell you about Vermont. For one, it's very boring. Secondly, I hate it. I want to be back in Derry and this is another reson I don't want mom to chek it. She'd just cry. She's so upset with me but I can't figure out why. Enuf about that though, I'll tell you about school. It's awful and I hate everybody there. They all tese me and point and laff. It's like they think I'm stupid but I now I'm better than them. I miss you so much. I hope you miss me too, otherwise I might just cry like mom. Dad's acting all funny to. It's because of this picture I drew of you, but that's a secret! I'm not tellin the deatails, but it made dad cry to as well as mom! I would have found it verry funny if it ain't for they sending me to the doctors. Basicly they think I want to die but actually it's you, isn't it? I don't want you to die though so don't.

Love from Patrick Hockstetter xxx"

Henry didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Man, Patrick was bad at writing letters! It was almost hilarious the way he ended the letter too - 'I don't want you to die though so don't.' Henry read that line aloud from his hospital bed and chuckled to himself sleepily. Jennifer had handed him the letter earlier this morning and he spent his time reading and reading it over and over to himself. It was just too funny! Many patients gave him odd looks as he laughed, some smiling slightly, some annoyed at all the noises he was making so early in the morning. Henry didn't care, instead he asked Jennifer if he could borrow a pen and piece of paper to write a reply. Jennifer reluctantly gave him a heavily blunted pencil and two sides of lined paper to

write on. Nibbling on the edge of his pencil, Henry wondered just what to say in reply to Patrick's rather odd and jumbled letter.

Poising his pencil above paper, he sighed and began:

"Hey Patrick,

Thanks for the letter. It really made me laugh in an odd way. You really need to get better at spelling though. I mean, come on! Even I'm better than that! I miss ya too though, Patrick. I'm actually really bored without you too. I've been in hospital for just over a week now. It's horrible and I have no home left and I'm not quite sure why. The doctor and nurses said I tried to burn it down but I have no memory of doing so. Dr Annie was disappointed I think. They think I also tried to kill myself. No idea why but dad's dead too. Why did you send me a letter ending it with something about me dying? That's just weird.

I'm sorry that you hate school so badly. That sucks, man. And your parents are really fussy. It's actually quite annoying but I used to like your mom. She was nice before she went all funny. No offence.

Henry."

Henry supposed the way he finished his letter wasn't any better, but still a whole lot more adequate than Patrick's version. Jennifer offered to send it for him as soon as her shift ends.

Henry hoped Patrick would write back soon as he was getting rather restless being stuck in hospital.

**2**

"Dear Henry,

I'm sorry for being so bad at spelling. I'm just not verry good at writing, okay? So sorry. I am happy that you miss me too. I always thought you hated me. But I didn't hate you. You were my best frend. You said I would make lots of new frends but I didn't. Were you lyeing? I have none. You are luky to have Victor and Belch with you.

You're in hospital! I had no idea! I wish me and mom could visit you.

I told you you shuldn't kill yourself! Why did you! You're sell fish. Don't you know it would make me sad if you died. Good that your dad died though. He was a good for nothing mean man. And I told you I am no good at wryting. That's why. I cudn't think of a good ending for it.

Mom is weird. She homeschools me now. I don't go to the stupid pryvat school any more. I didn't lyke it.

Love from Patrick xxx"

"Hey Patrick,

You're right. You are pretty lousy at writing but I don't care. I just like still speaking to you. I haven't seen anybody in ages. Guess what? I'm still in hospital. They won't let me out and I can tell the cops are gonna get involved soon. With my house and dad, I mean. I don't know what happened to Rena, but I haven't heard from her at all. Lazy bitch! She can go fuck herself I don't care about her anyway.

Why would I hate you? Even if you were annoying as fuck... That's too bad. You're better off without those stupid rich kids anyway. They'd only turn you into a snob and make you even more of a pansy. I don't want you thinking they're better than me cos they're not. Vic and Belch aren't here anymore. I think something horrible happened to them and I can't get in touch with them. I had a horrible dream every night and they don't pick up their house phone or visit me in hospital like a real friend would. It's scaring me something awful. I don't know what to do.

Don't talk shit about my old man. Only I can do that. He was a messed up guy though.

Homeschooling should be fun. You don't get any homework because you are at home all the time!

Henry. Xxx"

"Dear Henry,

You're the only one I really write too. Apart from Grandma, but that's not as much fun because she's an old grandma haha. I hope they let

you out soon. It sounds like it really sucks. The food in hospital is real gross to. And the cops! Wow! That's cool! Will it be like a shootout! I hope so. That would be fun. Like in the movies with cowboys and Indians. Rena was horrible. I don't like her at all. She's mean. Did she run away?

Nobody could be better than you Henry. You are the coolest guy I know. What! I can't believe Vic and Belch could do that to you! Maybe they got into accident or busy at school. September's always the busy month of Junior High. Sad that you so lonely in hospital though. Mom says she hopes you get better soon. I hope that too.

Love Patrick xxx"

"To Patrick,

Maybe you're right about Vic and Belch. They-

Henry was halfway through writing his sentence before his drip started playing up again.

'Ugh! You stupid thing!' He complained, feeling the familiar stinging sensation going into the back of his hand. It felt although it were lemon juice on a paper cut, it was that stingy. He didn't even know what was inside that drip - Certainly did nothing for his energy. It made him want to sleep a lot of the time but luckily that pain in his neck had long gone.

A young man came jogging into the ward, his white coat flapping out behind him. Henry guessed he was another nurse and tried to catch his eye. The man was short and scrawny with blond flyaway hair and whenever he spoke, he spoke with a lisp. A tag on his jacket identified him as 'Huck'. As soon as Huck approached his hospital bed, Henry felt himself grow relaxed and leaned back into his pillows, holding his drip hand in the air for him to inspect. Without looking into the man's face, Henry had no idea what he was in store for. He felt sharp teeth dig into his hand and his eyes flew open with mixed pain and astonishment. The man's face was in fact, not a man's but a clown's face in it's place! Henry let out a startled cry - 'Pennywise!' - his voice coming out feeble and girly. His hand was still clenched between the clown man's crooked, yellowing teeth. He

could hear the sounds of his own bones cracking easier than matchsticks. Each tooth was about two inches long and reminded Henry amazingly of a tiger he once saw at the circus. Blood dripped down between the teeth and made red blossom across Henry's bed sheets like large flowers. His eyes were wide with pure, numbing terror. Only just distantly figuring that the blood was his own, Henry let out a louder, more shrilly scream and leapt out of bed, his face wild, his drip hand still in the clown's mouth. Other patients stared; just wondering what all the fuss was about - but they couldn't see the clown-man now could they? Henry and Henry alone was the only one who could see the terrible monster biting into his flesh. The drip exploded sending the clear fluid everywhere and giving Henry an odd salty taste in his mouth. Unfortunately, Henry found himself slipping on the drip-fluid, and slid to the ground, his pyjamas soaked. A little girl pointed and laughed before being removed from the scene by her concerned mother. Some patients shook their heads, most thinking he was a mad boy. Not Henry though. Henry knew everything he was seeing was so awfully real. He let out more screams, trying his hardest to escape the clown despite having his right hand still attached to the empty drip. He found he couldn't leave as the tube attached to his hand was also strongly attached to the drip-stand. If he dared to rip his hand away, the needle would tear right through his skin. He was completely and utterly stuck. Henry puked, feeling although his world was spinning in the urgency of the situation. Before his eyes, the clown-man switched back to Huck.

'Hey! What's going on, kid? You okay? Calm down!'

Henry cowered back in fear, still covered in blood, whatever was in the drip and his own vomit and tears.

Now everybody had their eyes on Henry. Henry gasped, his voice shuddery and frightened. He sat down tearfully on his bed as the nurse put his hand to his forehead and brushed his hair back. 'You've had quite a scare, hmm?'

Henry was unable to speak; still paralysed with fear, instead, only tearful gasps and shudders would come out. The man took his hand away and determined that Henry had a fever. He handed Henry some Paracetamol and put a glass of water to his trembling lips. The boy glanced fearfully up at the nurse before taking the pills and clasping

the cool glass in his shaky hands. For a minute Huck ducked his head out the ward and whispered something to another nurse who nodded her head in agreement. The female nurse hurried back with a syringe filled with yet more clear liquid. Obviously this time it had something different in it as when they injected the boy, he immediately felt himself calming down and feeling a lot happier.

Henry dozed off despite being soaking wet, only half under the bedsheets and covered in his own body fluids. The nurses both tried to make him comfier but failed as his dead weight was just too much to take. Somewhat, they felt sorry for the poor boy. He was tangled in his wet, bloodied sheets, his borrowed pyjamas covered with antibiotic fluid and vomit; and yet, despite all that he had such a peaceful, sweet smile whilst he was sleeping. Huck half wanted to change his clothes and bedsheets whilst he slept but didn't want to wake the boy and cause another panicky episode. Instead, he pressed the buttons on the drip stand to silence the constant beeping that nurses just seem to grow immune to after a while. As the previous drip had burst during Henry's panic, he quickly went down the corridor for a new bag and intravenous kit; dislodged the old needle from the boy's hand, applied yet another butterfly-needle into his wrist this time and hooked him back up to the machine. Slowly, slowly he watched as the liquid jittered through the tube and travelled to the young boy's bloodstream. He glanced at Henry a second, sympathetic, before he heard the noises of somebody coughing and retching loudly from another room. Raking a hand through his messy hair, the nurse left to take care of another patient.

### 3

Henry awoke to see three people gathered around his bed; Dr Annie, Jennifer and an official-looking man who Henry had never seen in his life were all looking gravely serious.

'Wha?' He slurred, his brain only half registering where he was and what he was doing from the tranquillisers they gave him.

'Hello, Henry,' Dr Annie said un-smilingly. 'We need to talk to you formally if you don't mind.' That was more of an order than a request. Henry did as he was told and sat up in bed, his hair standing up on end.

The official-looking man had something bulging out his side pocket. Henry guessed it was either a gun or a taser and laughed quietly to himself. He had his arms folded tightly across his strong chest and stood powerfully, his legs apart although to appear dangerous. He never smiled. Ever. Not once.

Annie sat down on the corner of his bed while Jennifer took up the guest chair (despite being there for two weeks Henry had not one guest). For a while the two looked at each other before Annie sighed dolefully and began; 'Henry, I'm sorry but through police investigations, it seems that you were the one who killed your father and burnt down the house. Um, I don't really know what to say from here on, but they think it was an attempted murder-suicide and arson. The police, they want to take you away for further questioning and some more tests. I'm very sad about this... I thought you were getting better, Henry. I'm a failure as a psychotherapist! I'm so sorry,' she added before almost bursting into tears (she would have if it weren't for the desperate urge to remain professional).

Jennifer, who Henry had grown quite fond of in the two weeks he spent in the children's hospital, lowered her eyes to her silky stockings in her urge not to feel bad for the boy being accused of murder. Sure he was lovely and charming when he wanted to be, but Henry Bowers was a murderer, so why did she feel that tightness in her chest?

Henry simply nodded his head. He felt numb as it all came flooding back. He had stabbed his father in the neck fourteen times with his switchblade in the living room where he sat watching cartoons, found his lighter, threw apart the garage looking for the gasoline, then spread it across the kitchen and living room floors and watched as the fire spread across the ground, roaring with intense heat and power. The light had filled the entire household, Henry remembered. The smoke had made him sick but he supposed it didn't really matter as he tied the rope around his neck and jumped off the dining room chair. That stupid Rena had ran in at that point and he could only just hear her scream over the roaring of the flames and crackling of the wood. The coward-woman ran straight back out again - not even registering what was going on as she saw her boyfriend dying on the couch, her home in flames and her boyfriend's son hanging from the

ceiling by a length of rope. It just wouldn't compute. Not for her, not for anybody.

## 4

Henry could foresee this event the moment he woke from unconsciousness in the static-y hospital bed. He was going to *Juniper Hills*... The dreaded Juniper Hills that everybody would talk about in hushed voices either at school or out and about. It was a jinx word that hardly anybody longed to mention. How ironic; the kids at school had always poked fun at Henry Bowers and his unlikely companion, Patrick Hockstetter, telling them they would wind up there if they carry on the way they were going. Henry never in a million years expected their prediction to come true. Okay, with Patrick, Henry had a sneaking suspicion from the start that Patrick was Juniper Hill material, but himself!? Back then, Henry would swear hands down that he was the sanest boy in Derry. Oh how times change... Henry wished his life could be like an endless summer holiday just like the one he'd spent with his friends. After all, it was just a summer of being lost in the Funhouse with Patrick Hockstetter.